

Shenandoah

THE WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY

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FICTION

FREDERICK L. GWYNN

*The Parts I Left out
of the Odyssey*

VERSE

NOEL STOCK

JUDSON JEROME

RICHARD EMIL BRAUN

KNUTE SKINNER

ESSAYS

RICHARD FOSTER

Stendhal as Moralist

ROBERT O. BOWEN

*The Reader's View and
the Writer's View*

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DONALD DAVIE

KINGSLEY AMIS

HARVEY BUCHANAN

THOMAS H. CARTER

DANIEL CHAUCER

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CONTRIBUTORS

FREDERICK L. GWYNN is the Editor of *College English*. An Associate Professor of English at the University of Virginia, he is author of *Sturge Moore and the Life of Art*, and co-author of *The Case for Poetry*.

NOEL STOCK, who lives in Melbourne, has appeared in *Shenandoah* before.

KNUTE SKINNER, appearing on our pages for the first time, lives in Denver.

ROBERT O. BOWEN, whose note appeared erroneously in the Summer *Shenandoah*, is Fiction Editor of *The Western Review*.

RICHARD EMIL BRAUN is a student at the University of Michigan. He has published in *Poetry*.

JUDSON JEROME has appeared in *Shenandoah* before.

RICHARD FOSTER has published widely in the quarterlies. A graduate of Oberlin College, he is presently studying at Syracuse University.

DONALD DAVIE ranks high among British men of letters.

KINGSLEY AMIS is lecturing on English at the University College of Swansea, Wales. His novels include *Lucky Jim* and *That Uncertain Feeling*.

HARVEY BUCHANAN is teaching at the Case Institute in Cleveland.

THOMAS H. CARTER is a frequent contributor to *Shenandoah*.

DANIEL CHAUCER recently hitch-hiked to one of our larger midwestern universities, where he is now preparing a book on Ford Madox Ford.

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Frederick L. Gwynn

THE PARTS I LEFT OUT OF THE ODYSSEY

(an interpretation presented as a fiction)

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I. Prologue: Writer

I wrote the story about a man who had fought in a long war that almost ruined him and then had trouble in getting himself to go home and settle down. He felt easiest in places away from home, and sometimes he went off the deep end. Then he felt badly and knew it was wrong and tried to control himself. When he finally reached home, he was almost civilized again, but he had not learned that he could never get rid of the war.

As I was writing the story I kept wandering away from this man

into the minds of the people he fought with and lived with, and I wrote what they thought of him. Soon I threw out many of these passages because they explained too much and gave too many points of view for the kind of story my audience wanted. But I wrote the book for more than one audience, and a later generation that relishes interpretation may be interested in these omitted passages. For some readers, these passages may even illuminate the character of the hero.

II. *Supreme Commander*

Of course, he is a hero. All my staff and field commanders are—or were—heroes. (One must except this particular hero's rival, who was a suicide and a fool.) What is different about subject officer is that he is still a hero.

General A. and his aide were combat casualties, but a half-dozen of my top officers survived, and all of them seem to have made, as the doctors are putting it, successful peace-time adjustments. That is why your hero is still a hero. True, he has not yet made his peace at home. But the twofold struggle is still there, and so far he has not succumbed.

I found him extremely valuable. No one will ever speak of this war without recalling his part in it, especially his clever commando tactic in ending it. Yet I must be scrupulous in my appraisal, since in your position you would not be impressed by dead perfection. I will tell some bad things.

Once he actually turned tail and ran from combat. Once when he was fighting a half-dozen of the enemy by himself, he had to yell for help. I recount these things to show that he was very much a human being. Even as a diplomat—the role in which he often acted successfully—he failed to bring General A. around to our views on the most important mission I gave him. You will be interested to know that when General A. finally did see things our way and wanted to attack immediately, this officer restrained him until the enlisted men had received their breakfast. On the other hand, you will be sorry to hear that he struck some of the men physically when they stampeded to the ships on the occasion I have described and explained elsewhere. In that report I commended him for

breaking up the retreat. Here I must present the other side of the coin.

To me, one of the minor ironies of the war, and one of the pieces you must possess to fit together the pattern of this hero's character, is the difficulty we had in getting him assigned to our theatre at all. When my brother and I took the trouble to go to his home and recruit him for my staff, he pretended to be unable to face the reality of the war, despite his common sense and his personal involvement in the very situation that made the war necessary. It took us nearly a month to persuade the man that he belonged on my staff.

I could draw all these strands together by a sentence: Your hero is a first-rate military man who has never abandoned his common humanity. He *can* rise to responsibility, yet he occasionally *may* not. As a young officer, this would have shocked me. As a victorious commander who is dead, such things interest me only as a spider's intricate web in a distant corner of a room.

There are two things about which you and I can do nothing. I have seen enough war and peace to know that disaster is not always the exclusive property of the casualties. It is the survivor who must cope with the two curses of war. These curses are order and disorder. The order is composed of the military discipline and the combat that forces men together and forces them to depend on one another. The disorder is the license that these men feel individually when this order is taken away from them. In a sense, I am happy that my wife's mistake relieves me of the problem of coping with this myself. But your man, who has fought his war, must now fight his peace. He has lost the scaffolding of order that he found in combat. He no longer can depend on interdependence. He must discover order in himself. To do so, he must gradually bring impulse and instinct under control.

III. Priest

O God, Son of God, God of Light, Maker of Harmony, favor Thy priests and Thy peoples. God of Interpretation, defend Thy Interpreters. God of Illumination, cherish Thy explicators.

Have mercy on Thy people of this city, the murdered souls, the

violated survivors. God of Healing, restore the life and health of this community, replenish the goods of daily existence, make whole the wounded husbands and ravished wives, revive Thy spirit among us.

O God of Vengeance, Destroyer of monster and devil, continue to punish the barbarians who defiled Thy subjects. Thou hast called forth wind and rain among them. Pursue them until their vessels are no more. Besiege their minds until the memory of their heinous looting, raping and sacrilege brings them to repentance and regeneration.

In this harrowing, we ask Thy leniency on one man, the reverent but temporarily misguided commander of the barbaric force. Evil it was for him to land his war-torn men in our peaceful community without restraint, to wantonly rob, burn, and ravish as if we were the enemy. Evil it was for him to allow open killing and public consumption of our sheep and cattle, which we would gladly have served up in civilized fashion to these war-weary veterans. But we ask that Thy harrowing of this commander stop short of completion, that he receive Thy benefits because of his pious act. He it was, O God, who prevented the burning of Thy shrine, the destruction of Thy priest and his family. By this act, he truly acknowledged his other guilt, and I gave him the sacred wine in token of his further chances for blessing. Spare him, O God, as Thou hast spared other strayers from the path who later returned. Give him the power to see himself in relation to other men and to Thee.

O God, Son of God, God of Light, Maker of Harmony, favor Thy priests and Thy peoples. Restore our homes, and bring Thy famous Harmony to mankind.

IV. *Head Man of the Colony*

Really, I was most impressed with that man, though he didn't give us half a chance. We met two of his sailors wandering around our cottages, and I knew that they must be strangers because no one ever comes out here, and I said, weren't they nice-looking fellows. Ever since last year, when the kids voted me Head Man, I've really had to assume some kind of responsibility, so, never

dreaming that they'd come, I asked the fellows if they were hungry. When we got back to the cottage, it was all rather fun, with the candlelight and the soft breeze, and the sailors were very polite: I saw them looking around at first for something to drink, but when we served up our vegetarian specials they seemed to get a kick out of it, and one, the youngest boy, said he was so stuffed with steaks from where they'd just been—and I remember those steaks—that it was a relief to eat something he could digest easily. They stayed so long I asked them when their liberty was up, and they said they didn't care, they weren't going back anyway, and asked all about our colony, and of course we loved telling them everything, how we came out here, and what we believed in, and all. I really think that they would have stayed on with us, and goodness knows we could have used them in the garden and in the evening fun, but that handsome commander came along, their leader, and took them back to the ships. Oh, that dog! He wouldn't eat anything. Or we'd have had him. Why should anyone want to go home? It took us so long to get away from ours.

V. Enlisted Man

I don't know, I thought he acted kind of silly at the next place. Considering what we had to lose, there wasn't call for it. Those people are real hill-billies, you know, they get pretty mean, too. What I mean is, there's no point in stirring them up. I think the Old Man probably felt he'd slipped up, you know, back with the gooks, letting us get out of hand, and then that colony of fairies, so he said he was going to see what was doing here before he let us loose on the area. He took some of us along, like a patrol back in the War, and if this wasn't worse than any patrol I ever was on. We went up to this big place, and no one at home, and I knew there was trouble. I was all for liberating a few provisions, but the Old Man seemed to think the owner was going to give us a party. You know what happened. This big One-Eyed O'Reilly, he owned the place, he came home and the Old Man gave him his long story about where we'd been, and it didn't mean anything to a backwoods character. I could've told the Old Man this from the beginning: you don't fool around with a hick. So we got into a brawl, and this O'Reilly is tough, and we finally

pull out with part of our skin, and the hick doesn't know who we are—yet. I admit the Old Man got us out of the place, and he did cut up this O'Reilly quite a bit, but what does he do back at the ship, he calls up O'Reilly and gives him his name, rank, and serial number. You know, these back-country people have curses and spells. I don't hold much on superstition, but you know what happened after that. Personally, I connect the two for not leaving well enough.

VI. Ship's Captain

Going down. Lasted out a hundred months of duty, saw home again, now I'm going down. Could be home, sit by the fire, platter of cold ham, bottle of domestic by my wrist, tell my wife the stories, toss hunks of ham to sheepdogs. Instead, feed the fish.

His fault.

Month on island was good: nice family, good food, cool nights. Delay a little for that. Brought luck, lucky wind, back to home waters. Maybe men fouled it up, broke into Commander's gear, just curiosity, he was asleep. Broke the luck. I sighted people having picnic on the beach.

Point is, his fault. Was asleep. Captain should be on bridge steadily only in combat. He stood all watches, nine days, day and night. Cup in his hand to keep him going. I've done it two days, not nine. He didn't want to get home, pull trick like that.

They wouldn't let us back on the island. Knew Commander was to blame.

Still alive then. Came to this harbor. Why didn't he come inside? Best land-locked bay, no chance of weather. Tied up the ships gunwale to gunwale, like decommissioning. Why didn't he come inside? We were sitting ducks, he got away, I'm going down. No home, no funeral. He had troubles, got more now, our curses on him. About five hundred curses, as I go down.

VII. First Woman

I really took the place out on the island to get away from entertaining servicemen in town here, you remember all the riff-raff that started pouring in after V-Day. They'd never seen the

city, they thought every woman was looking for a bed, they were loaded with money. I got a great kick out of it at first, but I knew it would get me. Not any one man. They were all about the same, officer or enlisted. And I saw them all, all levels. I used to hate myself. My brother famous, my father famous, my mother's father a naval hero everyone knew. Men would be so surprised at what I'd do. They'd try not to show it, but I'd always see that glazy expression when they found out the goddess was human. Or animal.

So I was really very happy the first month or so on the island. You know how the air is out there, and I used to get up early and ride for an hour and a half, and I did a lot of thinking. I didn't care whether I saw a man or not, and I usually didn't drink much, and I turned down lots of invitations. I guess they thought I was pretty strange. Then I began to feel my conscience scratching because everyone was entertaining servicemen, and who was I to let them go off and fight and never do anything for them? Especially as they were beginning to come back in droves, and those who lived far away discovered our area and were in no hurry to get home. So I started some suppers, always with lots of people, a whole Army company or a small ship's crew when they could stay together, and any stray girls I could round up, though I couldn't get many, that late in the war. I made a special dish that became rather famous, I guess, some sautéed beef with a sauce of cheese mixed with honey and sour wine, and the boys would nearly eat the plates along with the food. But of course I must admit that it was the liquor they liked best. I decided I'd use up what was left of my father's special stock, so it was years old and almost like a drug.

Practically every party I gave, half the soldiers or sailors would pass out. And I didn't care. I wasn't dancing or sleeping with any of them, I didn't care any more what happened to a man. I just provided what they seemed to want in the way of food and drink and what they did with it was no business of mine. Men were all animals as far as I was concerned. After they'd pass out, and some friend would drag them down to a guest-house, you'd go by and see them lying on the beds and floor and across chairs like pigs in a

pen, except that pigs are more ambitious. You'd think they'd feel guilty the next day and say goodbye, but oh no, that liquor and the food got all of them, and they'd stay till their leaves were up, and sometimes over leave.

Then this superman came along. He really was. His men were just like the others, but someone must have primed *him*. He knew just how to handle me. He was so damned able, but you know he was so damned weak at certain times. He looked like a Greek god going gray, and he wanted to be so honest about everything, but in the long run he was just as weak as I was, and I think he knew it, but he'd never say it, no matter how long he stayed. Which was a year, almost a year, anyway. I wouldn't let him go. I fell in love with him. He was married and had a child and he knew he ought to go home but I wouldn't let him.

The first time I saw him, he drank a half-dozen straight drinks and nothing happened. Nothing happened except he suddenly said he was going to punish me, and the way he said it made me cry and get hysterical, and I tried to get him to make love to me and anything to keep a crazy man from tearing up the place. But he wasn't crazy. He was just the one person I knew would have to drop in some day, who didn't like what I was doing and wasn't afraid to do something drastic. He had some abstract hatred for women who tie up men. He wouldn't sleep with me until I'd given my oath I wouldn't let any more men make pigs of themselves at my place. I stopped giving the parties, and he and his whole crew moved in, and we really had a very good time. I know it wasn't conventional, but the men were very nice, they lived in the guest-houses and went swimming and played games and stuffed themselves every night, and he and I lived in the big place like a bride and groom.

I didn't marry him because he was already married.

That and something else. He began to have nightmares, and that was when I knew he had troubles too. Maybe he was sicker than I was.

VIII. *Dead Hero*

Since nothing seemed to be able to kill him off and put him in our class, where he belonged, we had to get at him in the only

way possible: dreams. If you let a man think about his dead friends, he can think his way out of it, but if you make him dream of them, his own blood gets stirred up and he feels death himself.

The worst dream we gave him was a trip full of dead people, people he'd known and people he'd barely heard of, but all dead. First, there was the young fellow from his group who had been killed a few nights before: he worked on the hero by asking for a good funeral and by unconsciously reminding him of his son. Then came the blind preacher who predicted the troubles at home, and the oar-journey afterwards. Then the hero's mother, telling about his father going to seed at home.

Then—this was a rather vindictive touch that we sexless dead couldn't resist inflicting on a man who was still alive with women—his mother's face faded into a big group of women's faces, most of them beautiful and famous, but famous for affairs and triangles and colorful infidelities.

Finally, we brought ourselves into the picture. The Supreme Commander came first (once I would have fought him for the position, but it's no matter now), telling the hero of the awful story of when *he* got home. When my turn came, I was to needle the man about his adventures, but by this time he was unnerved and so sincere that I found myself asking all about how my son behaved in the war after I was killed. I wasn't much good at punishing the hero, but his crazy rival took over, the one who had lost the popularity contest, and he did the trick simply by staring at him and refusing to speak. After that, it was probably an anticlimax to have the parade of thousands of dead men and women, killed in the war, screaming at him.

I think that this all really got to his heart. But do you know what else I think? I think that he is lucky just to be alive. Which is obviously worse, a dream or a death?

IX. *Second Woman*

You know what I think? I'd say you were really unlucky. You and all your women. You have a great reputation for being so smart, and just look at the women you tie up with. That first one, as far as I can tell, was about as stable as a humming-bird—taking in all

those men with you. Then the two hags that did some of your men in: if they don't sound like a boy's view of a woman after he's been with her the first time: ugly, and bitchy, and just existing to prey on men, and really tear them down. Then that girl trio—oh, sure, everybody said they were beautiful, and just the thing to sing to big brave fighters back from the war, and all you could do was *not* listen to them, instead of handle them. And just about what's happened to you with me: you've been here how many years moaning about wanting to go home and being in an out-of-the-way place and look, you never do anything about it. All you can see here is another boudoir and bitch, singing and carrying on and all party. You think no one ever had a home or wanted a family except you and the little woman back home. Well, let me tell you.

X. Poet

He was never unknown to us,
even to me, the blind one.
The young girl saw him and loved,
the young men envied his bearing.
Naked he came from the sea,
but he came into our halls with wisdom and tact,
his heart was strangely softened.

He told where he last had been.
We felt the seven years' loving
and hating and longing. He spoke well.
The girl and her father were shocked,
but I could piece out the pattern,
pattern of men out of war,
out of their depth, into shallows,
shelved by disorder and order.

I sang. I told of his conflicts.
He wept. He properly wept for his conflicts.

The young men had some sport with him.
I told a dirty story.
At the dance I was glad not to watch the girl's face.

Then, foolishly fearing he lacked an identity,
this hero asked me tell of the horse,
the end of the war, the triumph.
I would have avoided this end,
but he thought it was one thing needful to him.

His bearing broke down, he cried in remorse,
he wept as a wife being led into slavery,
he wept for the war and the dead.

Reputed crafty, the fox of the plains:
no magic now, no guile,
no habitual wiles:

This was up from the core, this was true.
And this was the cause of his wandering.

XI. *Young Man at Home*

I couldn't see why he was so hard on us. I admit we weren't big heroes, the way he was, but we'd never had a chance to be. We were too young when the war started, but most of us lost at least one father or brother or uncle. And from what I hear, he was to blame for the loss, and it was on the way home, not in combat.

You can call us a lost generation. None of us did much except play checkers and toss horseshoes during the day, and then drink and eat and roll in the hay at night. But there wasn't anything else to do on our island. His wife was pretty nice to us—I was never interested in marrying an old lady, but some of the older boys were—and I think she knew that she and her husband were somehow responsible for the big party we carried on month after month. I can see how his son felt: he wanted to be a hero like the old man, and after all we were eating him out of house and home. But I don't know, it seemed to me that for the big hero to sneak back in disguise and knock off a hundred young fellows wasn't right. He was just taking something out on us. Nobody's perfect. But that includes him too.

XII. *Third Woman*

Of course, everything went wrong. I was happy to see the old boy back—I never did get interested in any of the young men who

were left at home—but I really had forgotten just how childish grown men can be. Here he turns up playing a big trick by pretending he's someone else, as if I couldn't tell who he was even after twenty years. Then he has to show off by getting rid of all the young men who had been hanging around, though I guess this gave him a chance to see how Son would act, too.

But I'll never forget the moment when he was trying to come out of disguise and produce a big effect. Nurse told me it was he and I pretended not to believe her. Then of course Son was around just at the wrong time, telling me I ought to melt into his father's arms. But I was in no hurry. After all, my husband had been home long enough now to check on me, but I hadn't had any chance to check on him. Not that I would, but he had to make the first move.

Pretty soon he got the idea, and I must say he hadn't lost a word of his old fast talk. In two sentences he got rid of Son and got a bath arranged and gave me a sign that he was still just a man.

But do you know what the first words he said directly to me after twenty years were? He said: "For real stubbornness, you really make all other women look weak. Well, I'm going to sleep alone tonight."

Now, I was ready for this, and I'd moved his favorite piece of furniture, that big bed he built. But you know what actually happened when he mentioned that big old bed? I did just what he knew I'd do. I melted, I acted just like a girl. Pretty soon we both cried a little, and I was glad he was back, no matter what had happened.

Pretty soon he was telling me all about some duty he had to do, something about an oar, too, but I didn't care much. Later on I listened to all the war-stories and travel-tales, but not too carefully, because I knew I'd be hearing them for the next few years. I really didn't even care much about the two women he stayed with. I would have, twenty years ago, but now I'd just as soon he did all the worrying.

And it's my guess he's got plenty to do. No one's going to help him on that.

XIII. *Epilogue: Writer*

Those are the parts I was smart enough to leave out. But I'll admit that I never got the right ending for that story. The last chapter is about the weakest in the book.

The oar business was going to be bigger. There's an old Navy gag when someone asks you about shipping over, signing up for more sea-duty. Listen, you say, when I get back to dry land I'm going to get a big oar and start walking inland. When I get to a place where people ask me what that thing is on my shoulder, that's where I'm going to settle down. Maybe this has a meaning only for old Navy hands. They all know that you can never get that far from the sea. Once you get involved in ships and war and being away from civilization, it never completely leaves you. During the war you want it to, but it won't. After the war, you think it has, but it hasn't.

That was the oar business, and you might know that some hack would pick it up and write a sequel that took it literally. I can't believe I care very much, but here I am telling about it. A writer wants to tell people how it really was, and when he fails, he can't help wanting to tell them what they should have seen. I don't think that my ending was right. But I did the best I could at the time, and maybe there isn't any ending to the story of a man who survives his war.

Noel Stock

The Serious Artist

Here a poet curled for sleep
Snuggles in love's afterglow
Till grief's concomitant of tears
Predominates to overflow.

Within the dawn's ascendancy
Mnemosyne sustains a fall—
The cause of heart-felt tears last night
By no means easy to recall.

But clerking later, pen in hand,
Imagination fancy free
Discovers (with some slight amendment)
Remnants of his poesy.

Thereafter forges this and that—
Each tiny sparklet from his mind
He thinks is worthy to preserve
As sort of duty to Mankind.

The finished product, monumental,
Ranges Past and Prehistoric
Where even Toynbee fears to tread;
His local vision is . . . well . . . "chronic."

Twenty lines in the "raging blood,"
A further ten explore the womb.
Caressive prying of his mind
Delights the worms in Caesar's tomb.

Initiations, totems, rites
(Implicit mention of taboos)
Complete the body of his work.
Here now are his religious views:

*Some ancient city falleth down
Says rumour in the hunch-back seas;
This screaming in my bone and blood
Has now become my sole disease.*

*The effigies of ghost-tracked places
Singe the dry creek bed of veins
And sting the me that rides my head—
Reminders of the ancient chains.*

*My heart, Picasso's time-clapped clown,
(In Pauper Time's dynastic car)
Seeks through the lost leonides
Love twinkling in a single star.*

His pleasure in these lines he shares
With editors who nod and sigh.
Vibration of a tuning-fork
Excites a kindred fork nearby.

Beacons on the towers of Hell
Signal from afar to near,
Our poets, back from Make-Believe,
Present us with a souvenir.



Finality

Finality adheres to fact
as
to the very fact
(of a)
Banking aircraft
wheels
down
turning
for
home.

Knute Skinner

No Bodily Ties

He used the anticlimax which was left
with stale regrets reused on several ears.
We who had heard had long since stopped the tears
which ran their course before we were bereft.

No wonder then the unfelt funeral.
Pain may endure; grief has no bodily ties.
The brains which bear it live on when it dies.
We mourned his life who ever mourned at all.

Robert O. Bowen

THE READER'S VIEW AND THE WRITER'S VIEW

There is in current literary criticism, and especially among academic critics, a marked predilection toward considerations of style. Quite often this leads to a better understanding of a given writer's work; on the other hand it has also contributed to a widespread confusion as to what modern prose is and how it functions. The problem arises in the most natural way possible. Since a critic must read the words in a novel in order to read the novel at all, he tends to think of these words as the novel itself. In the most pragmatic sense the words are the novel. But mull over these words as one will, so long as he does not get beyond them, he is not criticizing the novel. Rather he is cataloguing it.

While the critic, because he is a reader, tends to stop advancing at the verbal level of style, the writer rarely thinks of style at all. He thinks of what he is trying to express. If after much effort his finished expression is staccato, as with Hemingway, all right. But whatever it is, it is only incidentally that. The important consideration is not what it looks like or how long the sentences are but what it means, where it came from. The writer who is style-conscious enough to preconceive a certain way of writing, to limit himself to certain mannerisms, is working backward. He is letting the language control him, rather than he it. The real issue is how the writer sees or feels the material at hand. For example, in one of my novels I used the term "total bastard" to refer to an unpleasant person. This was done because the character who controlled the view of the particular scene was a seaman, and I intended to suggest his attitude through a term that seemed near him. In another book I use about a similar unpleasant person the term "not a nice person." Again I did not think about what style I was using; I simply thought about whom I was representing, what attitude I was trying to express.

There was a time when the novelist was a chronicler, writing about events abstractly, dealing only in facts and in terms of fixed systems of values. Today the writer writes out of his experience of life, out of his feeling for what he sees, hears, or even reads. But always about life as he orders it into one formality or another of prose art, in particular and refined terms. Those who employ in their writing formalities not suitable to art, the generalizing formalities of philosophy or psychology, for instance, are not literary artists. They are proselytizers or propagandists, operating under the same erroneous principles as the confused critic. This point needs reiteration because the confusion is so widespread in our time, and because it seems that it was foisted onto ignorant writers by more ignorant critics, a case of the stupid leading the foolish.

The tendency to evaluate dramatic situations within a novel according to values from without that novel can be attributed to a specific aspect of literary education in the American university system. Most college courses in American Literature include straight-faced treatment of Captain John Smith's work as literature. Here it is quite certain that no other justification but subject can exist. One often hears the objection to such inclusions that they are "history as literature." How many have asked whether the teacher who works his class on its random way through an anthology of Captain John Smith and Jonathan Edwards and Cotton Mather and the like can change his critical method when the class reaches Hawthorne and Melville? Is it not obvious that the handling of certain traditional writers, Smith being among the most unsuitable of the lot, requires that a teacher, a scholar, give up literary criticism altogether and become a social historian? Yes, of course, but it is seldom apparent to such scholars that they are not critics, and they do not hesitate to "explain" literature through their observations on subject.

A critic is one versed in the standards of literary excellence. Now, unless he have the insight of a literary artist, it is next to impossible for a critic to evaluate any contemporary writing that is literature. If the writing be literature, be a particularly accurate expression of the spirit of this time and place, then its form will be unique; because it is unique, it will be something different

from any previous work. It will, in short, differ because its standard of excellence will differ out of newness. How, then, is the critic to differentiate whether it is better or worse than the standard it grew from? Can he say, without looking at the work with an artist's view, whether it is more or less?

The good critic asks, as Edmund Wilson does of Sade, What is this man trying to say? Why? And why in this particular way? In order to understand such questions, the critic must be something of a literary historian and bibliographer. But this is not to suggest that the adverse is necessarily true and that a literary historian is a critic—any more than that a carpenter is a brain surgeon because both use chisels. A good example of the literary historian acting as a critic has been given us in Van Wyck Brooks, who actually justifies *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as great literature because it sold well! Thus the critical problem today is not merely that we have taken to arbitrarily interpreting literature according to a whimsical scattering of value systems that are foreign to its nature, but from this misunderstanding we have progressed to the point where we now act as though all persons in any way connected with books are equally competent to judge them. And if someone object that Van Wyck Brooks has been a whipping boy for this argument too long now and that he is no longer read, let that person consider that Brooks' work is in every reputable library in the country and continues to sell.

Currently this trend toward making critics of everyone has taken shape in a vast amount of invective against the violence of the contemporary novel. *The Saturday Review* ran a series of lead articles not long ago in this vein. The invectors were educators and others, few of whom were equipped by their professions to even begin an appraisal of that sort. Naturally, their comments took the form of scolding writers for teaching violence or for not being more "positive." Perhaps this makes good copy and so must be with us. Journalistic expedience is not the all of the thing, though, since we continue to hear the same anti-violence talk from eminent scholars.

I should like to comment briefly on this violence as it signifies to a writer. First let us make clear that I am not discussing

the violence of Mike Hammer or the comic-book heroes. I am discussing that sort of meaningful violence that occurs in, say, Faulkner, Carson McCullers, Norman Mailer, and, for that matter, my own novels. I ought, after all, to have a reasonable idea of what my own work was intended to mean. The first thing to be noted about this violence is that little of any of it appears pleasurable. A reader is dragged through it almost against his will, and, as many have said on closing a book, feels that he has been wrung out. The actions of Faulkner's people more horrify than amuse us: the situation of Mailer's victims in *The Naked and the Dead* frightens us at our own helplessness more than it could ever titillate us.

If we look at current literature with these ideas in mind, we immediately become aware of what its statements are. We see a world in which the individual has lost all meaning except that possible in some terrible and disruptive act, as with the psychotic prophet of Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*. Or a world in which the current popular morality leads to hypocritical acts of the most appalling violence, as in my own *Sidestreet*. Or one in which people are torn between shifting values so that out of their anguish to attain any, they lose all, as in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*. The novelist is not concerned with violence in itself; this is merely the dramatic term, the verbal level, at which he expresses himself on the violation of humanity that is so common in the modern world.

One need go no further to demonstrate that the denigration of contemporary fiction on the ground that it incites to violence or that it deals in merely a reportage of violence can hardly stand. Looked at in this way, the writer's way, one immediately perceives that the writing is not less heartless but more so than that in the "positive" potboilers of pseudo-religious or pseudo-historical novelists. All that is required in the writer's view is that one ask what the violence seems to mean "in the terms of its setting," and to bear in mind that the terms are human in the full sense rather than simply intellectual as in psychology or sociology.

The serious writing of today is very much of a cloth with the serious writing of any day. In prose the major difference, and possibly the major cause of critical confusion, is that the modern

writer tends to rely more on implied statement through images and analogies and because of this requires that the critic be more sensitive in his reading. There has never been a time, however, when the critic could afford to fall into the errors pointed out here, for criticism is a necessary element of a culture's literature, and without it, both writer and reader suffer.

Whenever the reader's understanding of writing differs widely from the writer's understanding of writing, there is bound to be a reader loss of that something more beyond the verbal level that makes literature a thing higher than mere fact or didacticism or titillation. It is this something more that is the real concern of the critic, this and very little else.

Richard Emil Braun

Are There Any Questions

I think we need no longer spot naiads
or trace down poltergeists
to realize our intimate
echoings.

Today I found something on the floor
beside my bed. To all
appearances it was an old
bicuspid or

a piece of ginger-root. But actually
it was a thing, completely
unidentifiable.

I must confess

I've been inhospitable. I broke
off one appendage then
attempted crushing the whole thing,
then stopped afraid

of having pain for pain somehow. I tried
to get it out of sight
but didn't manage. There it is.
Now I don't care.

Judson Jerome

Who Sadly Know

*"People in this age
are not so apt to kill themselves."*

Dryden, *Sir Martin Mar-All*, III, iii

You would scuff through the violets
with jangly boots and turn up earth,
oh Cavaliers; your thrusts of wit,
or sword or self excite our mirth—
they excite also certain fears:

When you have stript the lady down
to what you understand for sure,
oh Cavaliers—when savage sight
has raped the hypocrite demure—
can you endure what then appears?

When you have bruised and bound the whore,
with her soft back against the stake,
oh Cavaliers, who suffers more—
the nerveless flesh or nerveless rake
who cracks his wit about her ears?

Crumpled upon the floor are clothes
with artificial flowers torn,
oh Cavaliers, by you who know
the soil in which all blooms are born,
who sadly know—oh Cavaliers.

Richard Foster

STENDHAL AS MORALIST

The rediscovery of Stendhal has been motivated largely by historical rather than aesthetic interests. His novels have been studied as expressions of the encounter between romantic individualism and eighteenth-century rationalism, as witty critiques of the political and class conflicts in post-revolutionary France, and most often as revelations of the career and opinions of their fascinating author. But interest in them *as novels* significant for their artistic properties of theme and techniques has either been absent or overbalanced by other concerns. Perhaps because we have not admitted Stendhal to E. M. Forster's universal room where the world's great novelists sit down together and leave the baggage of their lives and times outside, our understanding of his works has some shortcomings. An important one has been the rather poorly defined belief that Stendhal, skeptic and cynic, establishes no positive philosophy, no coherent and objective ethic within the world of his novels. Pierre Martino, an earlier French critic of Stendhal, says of *Le Rouge et le Noir*, for example, that one must "écarter absolument, si l'on veut le comprendre comme il a été écrit, toute question de morale..."¹ This view is supported by Howard Clewes, a more recent British writer on Stendhal, when he asserts that his characters lack a sense of guilt, that the clash between good and evil basic to all drama becomes in Stendhal's novels nothing more than a clash between individual wills.² But some modern critics, perhaps fearing just such conclusions, discover in the novels an intense moral consciousness. Harry Levin, for example, rejects for Stendhal the admiration of modern "supermen and nihilists and *déracinés* and *immoralistes*" and rightly claims that "no writer has more cogently insisted that egoism is self-destroying and that the few cannot be happy when

¹Stendhal (revised edition; Paris, 1943), p. 185.

²Stendhal (London, 1950), pp. 124-125.

the many are unhappy."³ But again, Levin only puts Stendhal into historical perspective as a social critic holding up the mirror of fiction to the follies and injustices of his time. He provides no answer to such an outraged Victorian absolutist as George Saintsbury, who judges great writers by their philosophic "high seriousness," and who could no more approve Stendhal's novels as "objective" social criticism than he could enjoy them as merely amusing amoral comedies.

While it may not be important to lay Professor Saintsbury's ghost it is important to understand fully Stendhal's achievement. What seems to have been overlooked is the essentially religious element in his fiction. Stendhal's concern for the condition of the private soul threatened by public temptation, his dramatic exposures of the difference between ideals and chimeras, his artistic vision of the relationship between human choices and cosmic consequences, invite comparisons of Stendhal's art not only with that of Balzac and Flaubert, but with that of Hawthorne and Hardy as well. The mere mention of these last two novelists in the same breath with Stendhal may suggest a dour insensitivity to the wit, the satire, the buoyant comic mood that is peculiarly Stendhal's. But there is no necessary artistic incongruity between abundant laughter and seriousness of theme. While recognizing Stendhal as primarily a writer of comedy, I would like to argue here that the ethical scope of his novels is larger than that of satire and social criticism; that the novels are, in fact, expressions of that severe and reverent moral idealism which is fundamental to most "great" literature, and which has traditionally found its fullest realization in tragedy.

I

The tragic note, complete with the ethical and cosmic overtones which the term "tragic" implies, is sounded in all of the novels. His plots, like the plots of tragic drama, focus on the internal conflicts of a morally responsible hero torn between two worlds—the world of human practice and the world of ideal

³"Toward Stendhal," *Pharos*, III (Winter, 1954), 50.

principle. When his heroes must make choices, the universe responds with signs; if the choices are wrong, nemesis stirs; and when the action is finished, it seems that something like "Fate" has influenced the resolution by involving itself in human affairs all along. My point is that the cosmic consciousness that acts as a sounding board to the action of Stendhal's novels gives to them a larger dimension of ethical seriousness than has been recognized.

Stendhal develops this cosmic consciousness by several means familiar in tragedy and in the works of certain other novelists. Like Hardy and the Brontes, Stendhal often gives his characters an uneasy awareness of Fate controlling their destinies, and supports this awareness by frequent use of suggestive coincidence in the action. In *Armance* Mme. de Malivert senses always something "supernatural" about her son, who is himself subject to moments of troubled superstition and fatalistic presentiment; the mood is fortified by the several ironic crises and misunderstandings which occur with ominous consistency at the orange-tree tub at Andilly, and which turn the childlike love of Octave for Armance into a tragedy-comedy of predestined errors. While its touch is lighter than in *Armance*, the hand of Fate is busy even in the frothy affairs of Lucien Leuwen: his frequent falls from his horse and his persistently maladroit behavior in the presence of Mme. de Chasteller make him believe that he is predestined always to appear foolish in the eyes of the woman he loves. Both Lucien and Julien Sorel embark on important new phases of their careers as a result of directives seemingly dropped in their paths by the gods. Just as Julien's chance discovery of a letter sends him on his fated conquest of Paris, Lucien, torn between his own impulse to go into retirement and his father's urgent insistence that he enter the world of public intrigue, chooses the career of political roguery when, in a public reading room, he happens upon a vivid portrait of the horrors of mediocrity.

In some of the novels this sense of almost religious dread is deepened by an array of signs and portents which—as in *Tess*, *Jane Eyre*, and *The Scarlet Letter*—foreshadow the action to come. The tragic collapse of Octave de Malivert's ideal of unwordly love

is foreshadowed when a "vision of death"—the mindless violence of a carriage which strikes him as it races through the streets of Paris—shatters his dream just after he has symbolically renounced the corrupt society of men by fleeing Mme. de Bonnavet's gathering. In the case of Lamiel, the intellectual offspring of the devilish Sansfin, the portent is even more emphatic: the coincidence of her arrival in Carville with a display of sham hell fires put on by some enterprising clerics results in her title "devil's daughter" and ironically foreshadows her death years later in a real conflagration when she is to burn the Palais de Justice to the ground in a wild gesture of incendiary nihilism.

The outcome of *La Chartreuse de Parme* is foreshadowed by actual prophecy. Old Prior Blanès, the star-gazer, predicts that Fabrice will go to prison for killing an innocent man and that some kind of crime will be attendant upon his leaving prison. He concludes by saying, "Si tu as la faiblesse de tremper dans ce crime, tout le reste de mes calculs n'est qu'une longue erreur" (VIII).⁴ That is, if Fabrice takes part in this second crime, he will not end his days "assis sur un siège de bois, loin de tout luxe, et comme moi [Blanès] n'ayant à te faire aucun reproche grave" (VIII). The first crime is, of course, Fabrice's killing of Gilletti. He is imprisoned in the Torre Farnese, and in connection with his escape a second crime is committed—the poisoning of Prince Ernesto at Gina's instigation—in which Fabrice is not involved. Since Fabrice, though hardly a saint, does end his days on a wooden bench in the Charterhouse of Parma, the action of the novel, if not its final moral impact, works out the aged cleric's original prophecy.

Though the action of *Le Rouge et le Noir* is not precisely outlined by an actual prophecy, the elaborately portentous scene in the church at Verrières early in the novel makes clear that Julien's unhappy career is also under cosmic surveillance. Having already begun to learn the value of hypocrisy and opportunism for getting on in a world of opportunists and hypocrites, Julien, as

⁴Further references to the novels will be given parenthetically, by chapter, in the text.

newly appointed tutor in the de Rénal household, visits the church because "il jugea qu'il serait utile à son hypocrisie d'aller faire une station à l'église" (V). Julien's experience of a prophetic shudder in the church is portrayed with many telling details. The crimson hangings at the windows bathe the empty church in a light "du caractère le plus imposant et le plus religieuse" as Julien advances to the most impressive pew, which, significantly, bears the de Rénal arms:

Sur le prie-Dieu, Julien remarqua un morceau de papier imprimé, étalé là comme être lu. Il y porta les yeux et vit:

Détails de l'exécution et les derniers moments de Louis Jenrel, exécuté à Besançon, le...

Le papier était déchiré. Au revers on lisait les deux premiers mots d'une ligne, c'étaient: *Le premier pas*.

—Qui a pu mettre ce papier là, dit Julien? Pauvre malheureux! ajouta-t-il avec un soupir, son nom finit comme le mien... et il froissa le papier.

En sortant, Julien crut voir du sang près du benitier: c'était de l'eau bénite qu'on avait répandue: le reflet des rouges qui couvraient les fenêtres la faisait paraître du sang.

Enfin Julien eut honte de sa terreur secrète.

—Serais-je un lâche? se dit-il; *aux armes!* (V)

The awesome religious atmosphere of the sanctuary, the supernatural aura around the "warning," and the obvious symbolic equation between the spilled holy water and the yet to be spilled blood of Mme. de Rénal, foreshadow not only the plot developments to come but the final ethical meaning of the novel as well.

In emphasizing the mood of inevitability in Stendhal's novels I have been trying to point out that any view which fails to take account of their essentially religious flavor is incomplete. The very basis of dramatic conflict in his novels is a clash between the external demands of a society's mores and the internal demands of the hero's conscience. And this "conscience" is not merely an expression of romantic "sensitivity." It is, rather, the characters' acknowledged awareness of an absolute and enduring moral order which announces itself in the variety of signs, prophecies, and suggestive coincidences that direct and interpret their actions. *Le Rouge et le Noir*, Stendhal's most perfect novel, provides the

clearest definition of the private human ethic sanctioned by this responsive cosmic order.

II

Le Rouge et le Noir is a tale of crime and punishment. Julien Sorel commits the civil crime of attempted murder, and society commits the grosser moral crime of helping him to it. For all its exuberance, then, *Le Rouge et le Noir* is a "serious" novel about a vicious society's degenerative effects upon one of its members. But it is as much a mistake to regard Julien merely as a pathetic victim of social forces as it is to understand his fate as no more than the logical outcome of a swaggering amoral comedy. For though society is the objective villain of the novel, Stendhal shows through Julien that there are possibilities for subjective moral heroism in the private integrity of the individual spirit, and, conversely, that moral evil comes into existence when the individual willingly violates his own nature. It is against such a self-violation that Stendhal's watchful gods warn Julien at the church at Verrières; and because he does not heed the warning, he must expiate his crime with his life.

The development of Julien's story after the scene at the church is a complex revelation of his willing crime against his own nature. The key to Julien's nature is innocence and spirituality, while the key to the nature of his world is cynicism and material ambition. Julien's choice of the world's way is, of course, encouraged by the sheer weight of society's mores in combination with his misfortune to be born into a class where withdrawal from the world is not a practical possibility, as it might have been for the wealthy Fabrice or Octave. The only way open to him other than retreat, if he is to have any hope of using the special intelligence he shares with the rest of Stendhal's heroes, is to conquer the world by the means the world has to offer. But precisely because of this intelligence, Julien is proud. Because he sees that the successful are either crafty schemers or obedient dolts who have sacrificed their pride to ambition, a real victory for him cannot be one of success at any cost. Part of Julien's plan, then,—the "Beylistic" element—is to set up for himself certain goals to be achieved as duties to his

pride, regardless of whether or not they are satisfactions in themselves or stepping stones to social success. But to accomplish his rationally conceived assault upon the world, Julien must willingly thwart his own natural sensibilities. Julien's crime against himself—the crime of “unnatural” Beylism—is comprehended in the irony that he cannot achieve his goal of proud self-affirmation without adopting the formulae for conduct and success prescribed by the society which he despises.

We are constantly reminded of this irony, and, consequently, of the moral issue of the novel, by conflicts in Julien's motivation. Though he becomes the resolved devotee of opportunism, cynicism and hypocrisy, we find him drawn, in spite of himself, toward “good” characters—toward human examples of sincerity, integrity, and piety—who act as mirrors reflecting Julien's true nature. Julien's natural religious and ethical sensitivity, first shown in the church as Verrières, is seen again in his almost superstitious reverence of such sincere devouts as Chélan and Pirard. When Julien first meets the Abbé at Besançon he actually experiences another moment of the same prophetic religious dread that he felt at Verrières. Moreover, the stern old Jansenist, who functions often as a kind of moral chorus commenting on the ways of the world and Julien's pursuit of it, continues to influence Julien even after the young hypocrite has followed his ambitions to Paris and the household of M. de la Mole. Mme. de Rênal has a similar function. Her respect for the church, which is shown to be more than dull and slavish conformity, is her expression of the same kind of intuitive religious sense that haunts Julien. Throughout her affair with Julien, her acute sense of sin and of adultery darkens the mood and anticipates the tragic outcome of their love. When her son falls ill, she believes it is God's judgment, and her sense of guilt grows so terrible that her love for Julien becomes a painful and tragic sacrifice of her faith and its rewards. The effect of her tortured devotion is so overpowering that “leur bonheur avait quelquefois la physionomie du crime” (IX).

Mme. de Rênal's function as a touchstone of Julien's true nature is set off by the contrasting figure of Mathilde de la Mole. Mathilde and Mme. de Rênal are alike in only one way: both are

psychologically ready to fall in love with Julien because both are bored and discontented with their present lives. But there the similarity ends and the significant differences begin. Mme. de Rênal, completely genuine in herself, simply dislikes the backwoods crudity and pettiness of Verrières society and is glad to be left out of it. While she does not love her husband, she feels no rancor toward him; nor is she, unlike Mme. Bovary, hungry for romantic escape. She merely remains aloof from the world that offends her, and fulfills her capacity for love in her children: "C'était une âme naïve, qui jamais ne s'était élevée même jusqu'à juger son mari et à s'avouer qu'il l'ennuyait. Elle supposait, sans se le dire, qu'entre mari et femme il n'y avait pas de plus douces relations. Elle aimait surtout M. de Rênal quand il lui parlait de ses projets sur les enfants..." (III). And when Julien arrives on the scene, she is not entrapped by his hypocritic wiles, but loves him inevitably because he is the one person in her world who possesses a nature like her own. She especially delights in her memory of Julien as she first saw him: "comme jeune ouvrier, rougissant jusqu'au blanc de ses yeux, arrêté à la porte de la maison et n'osant sonner..." (XIII). Mathilde, too, is enthralled by Julien because he is different; but instead of falling in love with the real man, she falls in love with a concept, with a role she has created for Julien. As the bored, romantic-minded daughter of a marquis, tired of Paris drawing rooms, Mathilde is bent on having a grand passion. She turns to Julien as an escape from her boredom. After countless difficulties arising from the insatiable pride of each, their "crystallization" is complete. But Stendhal makes clear that theirs is the passion of novels and the imagination: "L'amour passionné était encore plutôt un modèle qu'on imitait qu'une réalité" (XLVI). Just as she represents to Julien the glittering hauteur of Paris, Julien is to Mathilde a bold and beautiful insult—a naturally noble nature arising from the dusty bins of the peasantry to desecrate the holy ground of the old order. Mathilde, then, like Julien, is in pursuit of duty; she must proudly conquer what she fears and hates by embracing it.

The story of Julien's two contrasting love affairs becomes the story of his moral education in the difference between the true

and the false. Though Julien has been troubled by his sense of the grotesque in his affair with Mathilde, though he has been dimly aware of its empty and hysterical artificiality, it is not until after he has been shocked into awareness by his attempt on Mme. de Rênal's life that he begins to understand both women and the values they represent. The change in Julien is heralded by his response to the news that Mme. de Rênal is still alive. His relief is neither pragmatically selfish nor merely personal:

Dans ce moment suprême, il était croyant. Qu'importe les hypocrisies des prêtres? Peuvent-ils ôter quelque-chose à la vérité et à la sublimité de l'idée de Dieu?

Seulement alors, Julien commença à se repentir du crime commis.

.
Ainsi elle vivra! se disait-il . . . Elle vivra pour me pardonner et pour m'aimer (LXVI).

But Julien does more than repent. His attack on Mme. de Rênal—the objective dramatic equivalent of the moral suicide Julien had already begun to commit when he denied his own sensibilities with the rebellious cry "*aux armes!*"—brings to an end his career of impetuous actions and forces him to reflect on his life and its waste. During his long imprisonment Julien re-adjusts his values, examines the futility of his self-deceptions, undergoes, in short, the kind of self-recognition that enables the traditional tragic hero to face death with philosophic calm.

In allowing Mme de Rênal to survive, Stendhal has not only insured the fact that Julien's story revolves on a point of pure moral principle, but he has given that principle dramatic validity by presenting before his hero's newly opened eyes the living contrast between the false reality of Mathilde and the genuine ideal of Mme. de Rênal. The knowledge that Mme. de Rênal is alive evaporates Julien's pseudo-heroic posturing, and he suddenly understands the true happiness he had known with her:

Chose étonnant! se disait-il, je croyais que par sa lettre à M. de la Mole elle avait détruit à jamais mon bonheur à venir, et moins de quinze jours après la date de cette lettre, je ne songe plus à tout ce qui m'occupait alors . . . Deux ou trois mille livres de rente pour vivre tranquille dans un pays de montagnes

comme Vergy . . . J'étais heureux alors . . . Je ne connaissais pas bonheur! (LXVI)

In bombastic contrast to these quietly nostalgic reflections, Mathilde, entranced by the tragic idea of Julien's imprisonment, rushes to the prison. She is more passionately involved with her melodrama than ever before. But Julien is cool and disenchanted: "il était fatigué d'héroïsme" (LXIX). He can feel now only remorse for his crime, love for Mme de Rênal, and tender concern for his unborn son for whom, during his Paris spree, his only feeling was ambition. He says to himself in the face of Mathilde's tinsel passion, "Dans quinze ans, madame de Rênal adorera mon fils, et vous l'aurez oublié" (LXLX).

In her last interview with Julien, Mme. de Rênal confesses that her priest made her write the letter that destroyed him. Julien's former proud contempt for society grows now into moral loathing because even such a natural innocent as she has become society's unwitting tool. Her deep devotion to her faith has been used to manipulate her into a crime against love and loyalty—a crime committed in the name of a right which has been corrupted by society into a wrong. Julien's renunciation of the world and its ways is now so complete that he comes to despise even Napoleon, his former idol, as a supercharlatan.

Stendhal enriches his final portrait of Julien by revitalizing that natural humanity which it had been his hero's crime to deny. In his death Julien is neither the stock penitent of a morality nor the heroic gallant of sentimental melodrama because Stendhal makes him taste, at the end, the bitterness of despair and the very human dread of dying. Just as Julien discovered that no amount of rationalized Parisian adventuring could stifle the natural persistence of his love for Mme. de Rênal, he also finds that neither reason nor pride can entirely conquer fear. What supports him, finally, is the memory of his perfect days with Mme. de Rênal. And what prevents him from appealing his sentence or allowing Mme. de Rênal to beg the king for mercy is due as much to his faith in the absolute justice of his sentence as it is to his contempt for his executioners. A reader attentive to Stendhal's elaborate account of his hero's moral awakening must, then,

question the standard interpretation of Julien's willing acceptance of death. Julien's death is not merely a last theatrical flourish of Beylistic pride; Julien meets death willingly, and with a certain just pride, because he now knows himself, because he knows that by accepting death he is paying his debt not to society, nor to "duty," but to an ideal.

In *Le Rouge et le Noir*, then, Stendhal dramatizes within a cosmic framework the consequences of an individual's betrayal of his own nature to the world's confirmed rituals of greed and hypocrisy. He also shows that the possibility of moral regeneration is synonymous with self-knowledge, with the individual's recognition and acceptance of his individual moral nature. If *Le Rouge et le Noir* is the clearest statement of this ethic, it also marks some kind of midpoint in Stendhal's treatment of it. The dissimilarities between Stendhal's novels are perhaps somewhat greater than has been realized; but, as we shall see, these dissimilarities result from different dramatic approaches to an ethical vision which remains constant throughout his major fiction.

III

In all the novels Stendhal locates moral good in those rare individuals who, like Mme. de Rênal, hang onto the traditional virtues in spite of the influence of the world and its traditional vices. It is characteristic of Stendhal's heroes to reject the attentions of the clever and beautiful women of the world for the love of these essentially unwordly women—Armance, Mme. de Chasteller, Clélia, Mme. de Rênal—all of whom are characterized by intense moral preoccupations and a profound capacity for genuine sentiment. The heroines of the first three novels possess just enough clear-sighted worldly wisdom to enable them—at least until the hero comes along—to make a practical adjustment to the amoral world simply by remaining aloof from it while yet remaining in it. But the heroes, endowed with similar moral sensibilities, are not so worldly wise; their intense emotions and extreme innocence fit them less for the world than for the monastery. While this tension between private integrity and public corruption is

the thematic substance of all Stendhal's novels, his treatment of it develops, or at least changes, between *Armance*, his first novel, and *Lamiel*, his last. To state the matter simply (excepting, for the moment, the fragmentary and somewhat ambiguous *Lucien Leuwen*), Stendhal's tendency is to treat this theme sentimentally in *Armance*, tragically in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, and naturalistically in *La Chartreuse de Parme* and *Lamiel*.

Stendhal's treatment of the moral issue in *Armance* is sentimental because he shows us innocence mercilessly pursued and wounded by a cynical world. Octave is like Lucien Leuwen and Julien Sorel in his essential unfitness for life in society. Lucien is maneuvered by his father into the cynical game of politics though he wanted more than anything to be left alone; and Julien realizes too late that his only chance for real happiness would have been in retreat with Mme. de Rênal. But Octave's case of tender innocence is much more severe than theirs: he is introspective and mystical by nature, and actually dreams of becoming a priest for the isolation it would give. His love for Armance, of course, is a romantic dream of fleshless and remote spiritual union, dictated, it is hinted, by some sexual inadequacy. But Octave is entrapped, against his will, in a worldly tangle of misunderstanding and mean motives; he suffers frustration and disappointment and dies, finally, a pathetic victim of circumstance.

The earlier sentimental vision of *Armance* is abandoned, in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, for tragedy. Instead of telling the story of a reluctant and sensitive individual harassed and destroyed by a brutal world, Stendhal portrays now the tragic fall and redemption of an innocent who chooses the way of cynicism. While the victimized innocence of Octave remains ultimately intact, Julien's innocence is, as we have seen, self-violated and can be redeemed only through knowledge and tragic suffering. When he chooses to betray his own nature, Julien is, in a sense, guiltier than DuPoirier or Sansfin or Napoleon himself.

It is not apparent, however, that he is guiltier than Fabrice. Fabrice willingly compromises with society, and his unredeemed acceptance of pragmatic hypocrisy makes of *La Chartreuse* an ugly naturalistic portrayal of innocence corrupted. But in spite of

its bitter flavor, or perhaps more powerfully because of it, the novel shows the same signs of moral seriousness that characterize its predecessors. Like *Le Rouge et le Noir*, the action begins with a prophecy and ends with its fulfillment. Like Julien, Fabrice's essential innocence is reflected in his religious sensitivity to signs and prophecies, his reverence for Prior Blanès, and his love for the pristine Clélia. The first part of *La Chartreuse* suggests, however, that Stendhal was patterning the story of Fabrice on that of Lucien Leuwen rather than that of Julien Sorel. Fabrice's lively personality is closer to that of Lucien's, and like Lucien, he is constantly thrust from his innocent pursuit of happiness by society's busy skirmishes and intrigues. Finally, the prophecy itself foreshadows not tragedy, but retreat (and we know from Stendhal's notes that he planned to have Lucien Leuwen eventually retire from the world with Mme. de Chasteller) as the only source of ultimate satisfaction.

While the presence of these elements indicates Stendhal's continuing concern with the ethical issues of the earlier novels, the mood of the novel as a whole is one of defeated idealism. And as such it is a logical extension of Stendhal's earlier portrayals of the staggering external forces against which private innocence is pitted. While the first two-thirds of *La Chartreuse* seem to suggest that Fabrice's sublimely vivacious nature is to be proof against the world's schemers, the last third leads in a very different direction. During Fabrice's imprisonment in the Torre Farnese the tone of events changes noticeably, and in the rest of the novel the sustaining values of the earlier novels are bitterly parodied in the final actions and attitudes of the protagonists. Fabrice becomes a calculating and hypocritical clergyman, and Clélia, after she breaks her first vow, becomes more and more a criminal in terms of it. While the love of Julien and Mme. Rênal was a spiritually honest love carried on almost in spite of society's inverted morality, Fabrice and Clélia compromise with society until their love becomes a corrupt thing: Clélia takes her husband in name as society dictates, and keeps her vow in the word as the Church commands; Fabrice accepts the highest clerical office in the land and hypocritically acts the role of the devout for society's delectation. In

fulfillment of Prior Blanès' prophecy, even the novel itself ends "happily" in name only. As if to deny the reality of the kind of happiness ultimately achieved by Julien, *La Chartreuse* concludes with innocence corrupted; compromise has precluded either retreat or regeneration, and the novel trails off, finally, on a note of weariness and depression. An attentive reading of the last third of *La Chartreuse* and a comparison of it with the conclusion of *Le Rouge et le Noir* demands that we take exception to Matthew Josephson's view of the two novels when he says that "*The Charterhouse of Parma*, compared with the *Red and the Black*, is a work of affirmation; it is a 'hymn to life'; . . . it is suffused with joy, and good humor lightens even its most ironic passages."⁵

That something happened to Stendhal's treatment of the moral issues in his fiction in the nine years between *Le Rouge et le Noir* and *La Chartreuse de Parme* (and it seems probable that *Lucien Leuwen* would have gone the way of *La Chartreuse* had it been finished) is further borne out in his last unfinished novel, *Lamiel*, begun in the same year as *La Chartreuse*. The bitter laughter that accompanied the degeneration of Clélia and Fabrice rises, in *Lamiel*, to a pitch of anger found nowhere else in Stendhal. From the novel's unfinished fragment and Stendhal's sketch of its conclusion, we discover, first of all, that *Lamiel* is significantly different from the rest of Stendhal's protagonists. Though she possesses many of the instincts, good and bad, that motivate his other heroes, *Lamiel's* role is neither that of the romantic innocent chased into retreat or eventually corrupted, nor that of a tragic sufferer redeemed. While Octave, Lucien, Julien, and Fabrice are brilliant, sensitive, young men to whom things happen, *Lamiel* is cleverer, more worldly wise, more affirmative. While the earlier heroes seek happiness through a largely mental and emotional world which is often incongruously juxtaposed to the events of the real world, *Lamiel* objectifies her quest and thereby changes the face of the real world. *Lamiel's* career, culminating in her burning of the Palais de Justice seems to be Stendhal's symbolic

⁵Stendhal, or *The Pursuit of Happiness* (New York, 1946), p. 433.

gesture of vengeance upon the world for its hypocrisy, its corruption, its waste of innocence.

Incipient allegory can be seen in all of Stendhal's fiction, giving it that modern note of the bizarre, the fantastic, that dominates the work of Kafka and hovers intriguingly in the work of Fitzgerald and Saul Bellow. But in *Lamiel*, the most "modern" of Stendhal's novels, allegory very nearly displaces realism. As an individual Lamiel is drawn in two directions, each of which promises the preservation of individual identity in a world of dehumanized hypocrites. One is the familiar alternative of retreat to an inner sanctuary of asceticism and spirituality. The appeal of this alternative—expressed in her compelling reverence for the Abbé Clément—is a very strong one for Lamiel. In a strange way, the Abbé acts as her confessor; he warns her of the dangers of love, and she quite earnestly argues the issue of Hell with him. When she flees the brilliant but degenerate Comte d'Aubigné-Nerwinde to whom she has been unfaithful, her road leads, suggestively, toward "la barrière d'Enfer." But on the way she meets the gentle Abbé Clément who is "bien loin d'avoir un jabot trop empesé" (XVII). And when she smears her face with holly green in preparation for a second, anxiously sought meeting with the Abbé, it is almost as if she is in love with the fleshless innocence of the gentle priest. But Lamiel's destiny lies in the opposite direction; the devil is in the world and she is his child. As a foundling with no identity, her life, as far as the world is concerned, began with a sham holocaust in the town of Carville. When the women of the town screamed "Devil's daughter!" after the child, Lamiel answered, "Tant mieux... le diable mon père saura me maintenir en gaieté" (III). And under the tutelage of the comically diabolical Dr. Sansfin, Lamiel pursues her gay reprisal against the world that would not recognize her: she bilks the doltish Fédors and betrays the corrupt d'Aubigné, finding her true love at last in the outlaw Valbayre who, like Lamiel, makes war on society because it makes war on him.

Both Lamiel's choice of Valbayre and her symbolic annihilation of society's decayed justice in the burning of the Palais de Justice are repudiations of the instinctive reverence she shows in

her relationship with the Abbé. They are, nevertheless, moral acts in terms of the ethic that we have found at the center of Stendhal's fiction. Lamiel's problem—to find the means of maintaining and expressing her individual identity in spite of society's debilitating influences—is essentially that of Stendhal's other protagonists. And in choosing the violence of rebellion rather than the negative patience of retreat, Lamiel does more than affirm her own identity and its superiority to the world. Had Stendhal finished the novel we would have felt, I am sure, that Lamiel's rebellion capped Stendhal's entire labor as a moralist in fiction: implicitly it settles accounts for Octave's waste, denies the validity of Fabrice's compromise, and establishes objectively the meaning of Julien's subject regeneration.

IV

In defining what I believe to be the essential ethical conflicts of Stendhal's novels, and in showing how Stendhal universalizes these conflicts by giving them a kind of cosmic sounding board, perhaps I have succeeded in assuaging the indignation of Professor Saintsbury's morality. But one important matter still needs attention. Professor Saintsbury complained particularly of Gina Sanseverina. I have not yet answered him on that score, and I am not sure that I could to his satisfaction. Where does such a criminal as Gina fit into Stendhal's moral scheme? And who are the "Happy Few"? The happy few are very few, indeed; perhaps they are only Balzac's Vautrin and Stendhal's Gina, and possibly the elder Leuwen. Because they know how to live in the world they are happy; because they lack the delicate sensibilities of Stendhal's heroes, they are spared the hopeless suffering of Octave, the painful errors of Julien, the personal degradation of Fabrice, and the sacrificial anger of Lamiel. Because they are happy they have a vigorous worldly charm—quite different from that of Stendhal's innocents—which makes their amorality attractive. Gina is a kind of "natural" Beyliste whose disarming audacity and shrewd perceptions set her above the throng of petty fawning criminals that make up society. Her sublime egoism wreaks our vengeance on the world's Rassis and Ernestos for us. Finally, she is excusable on

the most important count of all: she does not commit the profound wrong—as Julien and Fabrice do—of being untrue to her true self. She is loyal in love (her first husband and Fabrice), she is straightforward in her relationship with Mosca, and as she is by nature exempt from a compulsively haunting moral and religious sense, she cannot violate it.

I have avoided here the usual temptation in dealing with Stendhal to draw heavily not only upon the facts of his life but also upon what he has told us about his own vivid reactions to them. I have done this in order to focus more clearly on his novels as works of art. Critics have always felt the stuff of serious literature in Stendhal's major works of fiction; but what has been felt has been left largely undefined. To examine Stendhal's major characteristics not only as foreground figures in a historical tapestry but also as particular lives with particular fates, is to discover, first, that for Stendhal social folly could also spell out personal tragedy; second, that in exploring individual men's hearts as well as the collective heart of society he knew, Stendhal endowed his protagonists with qualities and dilemmas that make for conventional tragedy; and finally, that the moral indignation which Stendhal turned on his own society implies, in his art, a broader, more universal demand on man's spirit. Stendhal's novels, whatever their tone, are seriously ethical books written by a morally sensitive man who, though he looked with envying and admiring eyes upon the genuine Happy Few, must have suffered something of the remorse and self-defeat of the "unnatural" Beyliste.

BOOK REVIEWS

A SUMMONING OF STONES. By *Anthony Hecht*. Macmillan, 1956.

Not long ago, John Malcolm Brinnin declared, "There is little of significance in American poetry today that has not been touched directly or indirectly by the Symbolist movement." Because this is something that cannot be said of British poetry, we find ourselves in a position where American poetry is far more truly European than British poetry is. Part of the responsibility for this must surely be Auden's; for his uniquely influential poetry of the 'thirties showed the British poet how he could evade the Anglo-American challenge of the post-Symbolist Eliot and, drawing on native sources, take British poetry once again out of Europe.

Now there is the intriguing possibility that the older Auden will be as influential in the U. S. as the young Auden was in Britain—and to just the same effect: making the newest American poetry Parnassian, provincial, even Tennysonian. Anthony Hecht is surely a case in point. Nothing is so immediately Audenesque about his poems as their insolently perfunctory attitude to subject matter. "Think of a subject, and verify it." Doubtless at all times indifferent poems have been written to this recipe. What distinguishes recent Auden poems is their bland refusal to conceal the fact, and just as the "Bucolics" in his last collection displayed what Auden called to mind when some one in the audience called out "Mountains" or "Lakes," so Hecht has a poem called "Japan" constructed on just the same principle. Five intricately regular rhyming stanzas present the author remembering that Japanese are little, that they are acrobats and jugglers, that they make ingenious toys, and that on the other hand they were fierce and treacherous in war yet afterwards eager to be friends, that now they are "very poor." We wait for the resolution into harmony. Instead the poet remembers something else—that (apparently) the use of human dung in the paddy-fields produces a disease called "schistosomiasis japonica." By a virtuoso-feat these Latin syllables are accommodated into the stanza without flawing its glassy surface, and this glittering expertise is the true climax of the poem

which needs only to be rounded off by a last stanza saying that the poet will have to revise his ideas about Japan. There is no pretence that the ostensible subject exists for the poet except as a peg on which to hang the embroidered robe of style; and style, thus cut loose of any responsibilities towards what it offers to express, degenerates at once into virtuosity, frigid accomplishment. Thus all we can say if asked to distinguish the good poems from the bad in this volume, is to point out that some are less accomplished than others—that, for instance, in a poem called "The Gardens of the Villa d'Este," the intricate regularity of the rhymed stanza is achieved, as it isn't in "Japan," with no respect for the stops and starts of syntax or the natural pauses of the speaking voice. "Japan" is as good as late Auden; and it comes as no surprise to find Auden selecting it for the *Faber Book of Modern American Verse*.

It's the provincialism that needs insisting on, for the poems are full of erudite and cosmopolitan references, epigraphs from Molière and so on; and the diction is *recherché*, opulent, laced with the sort of wit that costs nothing. Here and there too the poet knowingly invites what some reviewers have duly responded with, the modish epithet "Baroque." But if that is an accurate description of the style, it has nothing to say to the crucial question of how the style is related to its ostensible subject. For that the right word is the much less fashionable "Victorian."

Trying to find one poem that can be exempted from these strictures, I choose "A Deep Breath at Dawn," a poem in much simpler stanzas, altogether too Yeatsian for comfort both in diction and feeling, yet possessing what the more polished pieces so disastrously lack—a true development, unpredictable yet natural, of a subject which one thereby knows to be truly, not just ostensibly, the subject of the poem.

DONALD DAVIE

JAZZ: ITS EVOLUTION AND ESSENCE. By *André Hodeir*. Translated by *David Noakes*. Grove Press, 1956.

Jazz in England is still fighting for respectability. This is odd

when you consider the quality of the support it has had and currently has. Whatever happened to the Bright Young Things of London's *beau monde* who went mad about jazz thirty years ago? Are they such solid citizens now that they cannot admit they ever heard the name, let alone the records, of Louis Armstrong? And what about that very widespread rumour that King George VI had a complete set of Duke Ellington records on their original American labels, with a special disc secretary to look after them? And isn't there today at least one fairly royal personage who periodically invites both native and visiting bands to his residence? And isn't Britain's leading hot trumpeter an Old Etonian? Moreover, the two leading Sunday newspapers and the two main highbrow weeklies all run periodic jazz features sandwiched between notes on the dollar gap and reviews of books about undersea fishing or homosexuality. You would have said the battle was won, especially now that the general public is buying more jazz records and hearing more of the music in the flesh than ever before.

But that's the whole trouble. Whatever the general public supports is thereby instantly discredited in the eyes of a powerful section of the British intelligentsia. Post-war prosperity and the Welfare State have given ordinary people money for luxuries, for television sets, for the cinema, for lowbrow periodicals, for dancing, for records of all kinds—including, naturally, jazz and popular vocal music. This has caused a discreditable resentment among certain kinds of intellectuals. Hardly a week goes by without some passionate denunciation of mass entertainment, of the criminal habit of watching television, of the depravities encouraged by dancing, and even listening, to jazz (an aspect played up by large-circulation newspapers for all they are worth). The New Barbarism has arrived. And the attack upon it is launched along a wide front, all the way from J. B. Priestley, who has just fired four thunderous broadsides in the columns of—ironically enough—a popular Sunday newspaper, to the cultural monthlies, where John Lehmann and others foresee mob values closing over the head of the arts. Even Wyndham Lewis has published short stories flaying the social enormity whereby charwomen are permitted to own cars and fur coats. Even T. S. Eliot writes to *The Times*

attacking the project to build a fun fair tower in Battersea Park. Why? There is a fun fair there already, and no aesthete could pretend that a tower would do much to worsen the landscape. The *Spectator* shrewdly commented: "I suspect that the true grounds of the row lie elsewhere and that *The Times* and many of its readers do not really like the idea of Londoners enjoying themselves at all." Or at any rate Londoners must enjoy themselves in ways sanctioned and prescribed by *The Times*, the literary reviews and Mr. Priestley. By all means let the people sing, but let them sing Dowland, Bach, Verdi (the later Verdi, of course). Whatever they do let them not sing *Way Down Yonder in New Orleans*.

Such is the formidable neo-puritanical line-up confronting jazz among other items of popular culture, and this despite the fact that jazz, as distinct from vocal and instrumental corn, is still a minority taste: any request programme on the British radio will tell you as much. But our social diagnosticians have little time for fine distinctions of this kind. To them, jazz is either conscious philistinism, deliberately cultivated by the new cockney breed of Welfare State intellectual, or, much more typically, it sets out to exacerbate teenagers (equals potential or actual delinquents) into public erethism. No doubt a certain amount of necking does go on at the London jazz clubs—though I never see much—but the majority of the customers go to listen to the music, as could easily be deduced from the highly anaphrodisiacal discomfort of these establishments. Yet when a large film company planned recently to make a picture about delinquency, complete with dope, razors and offences against chastity, the first locale they investigated was the largest and most respectable of London jazz spots. They were encouraged to try elsewhere. The Old Guard, of course, the stuffy rather than the snooty, have never been under any illusions about jazz, right from the time of *Everybody's Doin' It* to the present day and *Oop Bop Sh'Bam*. The other week the Director of Music at Oundle, a fairly swanky boys' school, wrote to the *Sunday Times* to explain that jazz was given a free run among his pupils, because by not giving it "the stimulus of official oppression we hope to give full opportunity to boys to dis-

cover for themselves, as have many of their teachers, what ephemeral stuff it is and what nonsense it is to claim for it the slightest degree of sincerity or artistry."

Well, that's telling them, Pops. And the great thing about that denunciation is that, coming from a *musician*, a *musical director* at a *famous school*, it confirms what the neo-puritans had always known by instinct: considered as art, the stuff is strictly for the birds. Anything that a lot of people like would have to be that, wouldn't it? Actually, by a rather devious route, we have arrived at the heart of the problem. What jazz in England needs to come of age, to be mentioned at publishers' cocktail parties without an apologetic laugh, is the production of propaganda, to the effect that jazz is music after all, by a *musician*, or a series of such. This propaganda would have to be pretentious enough to appeal to the intellectual—a few casual references to Kierkegaard, Henry James and Rilke would go a long way towards working the trick—and must use musical quotations and technical terms so as not only to satisfy the musically trained but, much more important, to impress the untrained. It is true that such a campaign is in most ways hardly worth fighting, but the idea of the boys putting aside the latest Sartre to rush out and buy the latest Dizzy Gillespie is an edifying one, which may actually come about if the battle is skilfully generalised.

The first salvo, in the form of the books I am supposed to be reviewing, has already been fired. M. André Hodeir's work is being published in Britain as well as in the United States. In a country where I understand jazz is contemplated without flinching, M. Hodeir is likely to be received as an addition to a substantive category, but over here he is something new. He is indeed a musician in the respectable as well as in the heinous sense. The wrapper has him down as one unusually qualified to "bring off with equal facility a symphony and a work of jazz," and although I cannot remember ever having actually heard him perform in either incarnation, I am prepared to believe on the written evidence that he knows what he is talking about. He has also demonstrated—in just the right way to get him in solid with our intelligentsia—that he can read books as well as music: the names of five French poets,

as well as those of Teddy Wilson and Jelly Roll Morton, dignify page 1, epigraphs are culled from Camus, Homer and Freud, and the text abounds in such figures as Toynbee, Racine, Kafka, Malraux, Michelangelo and Descartes—the last-named in connection with the author's ambition to have written the *Discours sur la Methode* of jazz. Despite my slight acquaintance with the great work, let me say that M. Hodeir's claim seems in some respects justified, even if, like his illustrious master, he invents as many problems as he clears up.

The clearing-up work remains considerable. An expertly-ranged argument shows the folly of believing, as many still do, that the best, because the freest from non-African components, jazz was to be found nearest its beginning: after reading M. Hodeir one has it straight for all time that in this sense the native well of jazz never was undefiled. There follows by far the best one-page history of the form that I have seen. The weaknesses of certain New Orleans pioneers are next cogently exposed, and later we have a very clear account of what be-bop, the "cool" idiom and progressive jazz are respectively trying to do. It takes a good deal to persuade me that there is room for more than one opinion—a hostile one—about all but two or three of the modernists, and M. Hodeir accomplishes this feat. Other effortless demonstrations of the almost-undemonstrable include one of jazz syncopation and one of just what is meant by the rhythmic interest of these kinds of playing. All readers of this book will finish it much better equipped to hold their own in conversation on the topic. But I wonder whether it will help them to listen to the music. Before considering this I will mention what I see as certain significant limitations in M. Hodeir's approach.

Like many of his compatriots, but unlike them in avoiding the Crow Jim fallacy (colour prejudice in reverse), our author plumps unflinchingly for the negro as the repository of all righteous jazz musicianship and the source of all development; he has a specially warm corner for those negroes who have played in Paris. This attitude leads him into some logical wire-walking, as where he postulates a "negro spirit, which is the only thing that could have oriented these borrowings [from European music] in a single

direction"—offering an imponderable hypothesised to match a pattern seen *ex post facto*, and indeed many such imponderables, including "relaxation," "vital drive," and above all "essence" of jazz, rear their heads in these pages. But, more important, reverence for the "negro spirit" imposes on M. Hodeir a rigorous silence about the European modernists (by expert testimony a school now making valid original contributions, notably in Sweden), about the Dixieland revival (by any reckoning the most striking post-war jazz phenomenon, at least in Europe), about the work of Ruby Braff (by many votes the most considerable post-war arrival on the American jazz scene), and about the whole of the white Chicago-New York movement (by some votes, at any rate, and incidentally by mine, the most satisfying of the styles). Emphasis, finally, is thrown on the negro modernists at the expense of the white Americans.

I connect these exclusions, as typical of the serious musicological approach, with what I take to be the central weakness of M. Hodeir's position. His concentration on Ellington, jazz's nearest equivalent to a serious composer, and his selection for detailed analysis of *Concerto for Cootie*, one of Ellington's fully-scored pieces, are only two of many indications that M. Hodeir wants us to listen to jazz in the same way we listen to serious music, alert for harmonic subtleties and tolerant of the utmost melodic idiosyncrasy. But the two modes serve utterly different uses, as can be seen at once by reconstructing for comparison the behaviour of the jazz listener (talkative, foot-tapping, smoking and drinking) and that of the "straight" listener (silent, immobile, sober). By a piquant irony Jean Cocteau's call for music "that can be listened to without burying one's forehead in one's hands" is first quoted as applying to jazz and then discarded, by M. Hodeir's implications, as inapplicable. The whole point about jazz is that it favors the unreflective mood, that it does not require—indeed often repels—close concentration, that it is social instead of solitary, that it is, without being any the worse for it, the only practical *Gebrauchsmusik*, that for all the intense and prolonged pleasure it can afford, it is too slight a form for musicological treatment. And whatever this book may do toward giving jazz intellectual *cachet*, an

anthology of anecdotes about musicians would have been more appropriate and acceptable.

KINGSLEY AMIS

ISHMAEL. By James Baird. The John Hopkins Press. 1956.

Books, like men, may be classified among the elect or the damned, and their destiny foreknown if not fore-ordained. Those damned books are by nature specialized and frequently cursed with Original Turgidity, but occasionally one appears which deserves far better than fate usually has in store for it. Such a book is James Baird's *Ishmael*. A thoughtful and original study, it has something of interest and value for the artist, the critic, the social scientist, the culture historian, and even for that intellectual orphan, the theologian. For behind its learned and forbidding façade there is a probing effort to define the sources of the twentieth century religious and aesthetic sensibility.

Some thirty years ago, T. S. Eliot suggested that the function of the critic is to define the "structure of ideas" or the "organic wholes" in relation to which works of art have their significance. Mr. Baird agrees, but wishes first to define the organic whole to which the individual artist owes his allegiance, and to describe how that allegiance came about. Since it is his thesis that the "organic wholes" are always expressed in symbolic fashion, he does this by discovering what he calls the group of "representative symbols" used by the artist, and thereby he hopes to "add to the known facts of genesis and form" of the work of art. In this book, Mr. Baird attempts to define that structure of ideas known as primitivism, and to explore the meaning of certain works of art which fall under that name.

Now idea-structures, being creatures of human imagination, have histories: they are conceived, they grow, they change, and eventually they evolve into new forms which are absorbed into the culture memory. It is the mechanics and dynamics of culture change as it is generated and reflected in the artist's sensibility which is Mr. Baird's particular concern, for he desires to ex-

plore the modifications in ideological structure, and therefore in the symbolic systems, which define a particular culture pattern. He wishes to understand what he calls the "modulation in idiom" represented by the primitivist movement. In a word, his approach to literature is that of a culture historian.

To accomplish his task, Baird seeks to describe and evaluate the "material which the artist compels into new symbols," and *Ishmael* is the name which represents best for him the aggregate of symbols of modern authentic primitivism in the west. The name is of course derived from the writer whose work receives the central focus of the book—Melville, a "supreme example of the artist creator engaged in the act of making new symbols." These new symbols are specifically those of Protestant Christianity, and one of the main theses of this book is that the whole primitivist movement of the last one hundred years has been directed towards recreating the symbolism of Reformation Christianity in new and vital terms.

The critical thesis here is explicit: Mr. Baird is not concerned with the formal aspects of art but rather with the creative act expressed through the isolation and definition of symbols. As an environmentalist, he insists that the work of art cannot be understood apart from its "organic whole." The doctrines of "art for art's sake," of "purity in art," and the ontogenetic passions of the "new critics" are rejected outright. Instead, after citing Tillich's judgment that religion is the substance of culture and culture the expression of religion, he maintains that the primitivist movement in modern literature and art is a manifestation of a cultural-religious crisis of the first order, an attempt to create a new Protestant symbolism and sacramentalism, and thus revive culture. Whence primitivism is an adjunct of recent Protestant thought can be adequately understood only in that context.

In his analysis of symbols, Baird is compelled to use the language of the psychologist, even though he recognizes that by using such language the critic runs the risk of having his criticism misread as psychoanalysis. This has other dangers too, for "to reduce art to evidence for psychology is to deny the authority of the artist as creator," a heresy he utterly rejects. The symbols of primitivism must rather be understood as a response to the "basic human need

for sacrament," as an attempt to renew and replenish the sacramental poverty of Protestantism. Jung is called to testify that "the history of Protestantism is the history of chronic iconoclasm," and H. Richard Niebuhr to state that Protestant denominationalism (as a substitute for orthodox sacrament) represents "the moral failure of Christianity." It is Baird's argument that through the artist's attempt to meet this moral failure a cultural counter-movement has been functioning; that the last century has produced a unique development in the aesthetic history of Christianity, expressed through a conscious attempt of the "Protestant or Protestantly derived mind" to construct symbols to compensate for the sacramentalism lost in the sects; and that "in this act, art has become in the strictest possible sense, religion." The development may be traced in the history of primitivism, that is, in the artists' attempt "to rediscover the gods as psychic factors," and is illustrated in the work of Melville, Stevenson, Mark Twain, Conrad, Lafcadio Hearn, Loti, Leconte de Lisle, Verhaeren, Rimbaud, Gauguin, Stravinsky, and so on, each of whom reacts against the cultural (i.e. religious) failures of his times. Stravinsky's *Sacré du Printemps* "is primitivistic in that it presents the same world of the Urwelt discovered through the images of Melville and Leconte de Lisle. Ishmael, here at work in the art of music, deserts the mythos and the cultus of cities: he takes drastic means and goes down to the waters." While for an example of how sacramental symbol-making takes place, I again quote Mr. Baird:

Puer aeternus as Melville's full symbol is the emblem of corporateness, or communion with and in God. There can be no doubt of his obsession with sacrament, for he himself describes it in a confession to Hawthorne. As I shall presently show, the symbolic content of *puer aeternus* is the ideality of fraternal love between men, wherein the identity of one is discovered in the identity of the other. Melville's symbol is made of two disparate elements: the ideality of Polynesian friendship and the ideality of Christian communion in the Eucharist. It is perfectly clear in Melville's symbol that the inherited Christian ideality, no longer able of itself to command faith in doctrinal reality, is brought to life in new form by the addition of Polynesian reference. When this act occurs in Melville's art, it is

perfectly clear, again, that the new sacramental symbol expresses a new reality: it means that the absolute self is relinquished to fraternal love and that the emphasis upon the self-act of Christ's suffering is exchanged for emphasis upon Christ as the innocent man among men.

Now this sort of interpretation, however suggestive, raises several serious problems. The first is the relationship between primitivism and Protestantism. Primitivism, meaning that art inspired by the culture of primitive peoples, has also attracted and found expression in the work of many non-Protestant or Protestantly-formed minds. This does not contradict Mr. Baird's thesis, but it does suggest that perhaps it is not an adequate explanation of the role of primitivism during the last century. Certainly Gauguin and Rimbaud—both primitivists and both symbolists—were not concerned even subconsciously with revitalizing Protestant sacramentalism. But they were religious rebels and non-conformists, which suggests that perhaps that exhaustion of religious symbolism is not only a Protestant phenomenon, but a malady of post-Enlightenment Christianity in general. Surely the poverty of sacramentals reflects the poverty of the imaginative life throughout western culture, and the breakdown of a once universally accepted and understood idealism.

Moreover, it is somewhat difficult to know exactly what is meant by the "exhaustion" of Protestant symbolism—or indeed, what distinctive symbolism separates it from other forms of Christianity—especially in face of the axiom that the need to create symbols is a basic human need. Historically speaking, Protestantism was itself a "primitivist" movement in the sense that it was a conscious attempt to return to the primitive spirit and institutional forms of Christianity. This was explicit throughout Reformation doctrine—in Luther's view of the sacraments, in Calvin's reliance on Hebraic legalism, and even in the Anabaptist insistence on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The later history of protestantism, insofar as it is a history of denominationalism, may be validly interpreted—and usually is—as a continuing search to find meaning in an ever more primitive expression of the Christian wit-

ness. This radicalism is the common objective of such diverse Protestant spokesmen as George Fox and John Wesley.

If the need to create symbols is a basic human need, we must conclude that it is a perennial ingredient of human thought, a universal instrument of human expression. Whence symbols are always in a state of creative flux and development, modified in meaning and power according to their social and historical context. But we must not forget that they may be negative or virginal, that they may be expressed in an absence of forms as well as statements of form. Thus the interior of a Quaker Meeting House is no less pregnant with symbolism than a cathedral, nor is a Quaker worship any less sacramental than the Mass.

Perhaps the difficulty here arises from the word "primitive" itself, which has meant different things in the last hundred years. To assign it to a moment in the history of the religious consciousness is too limited, because such a definition lacks full context. Part of that context is certainly Romanticism, the French variety in particular, which reacted against the excessive rationalism of the Enlightenment and the Revolution, and which sought in the expression of feeling the most authentic human expression. Revolted by the materialism of the nineteenth century, in which they saw a degradation of individuality and the human spirit, the Romantics revolted against the growing industrialism and urbanism—the mechanization—of life. It is not sufficient to interpret this revolt in religious terms, as does Mr. Baird. Gauguin's Tahitians and Marquesaians were the true descendents of the "noble savage" of the eighteenth century, whose attraction is a recurring phenomenon in our culture. Today, of course, it is available in scientific form as the latest paperback describing "The Sex Life of Samoans." But the Pacific Islands were, and remain (despite atomic experiments) the embodiment of a dream world where, in a land where "time stands still" one might escape history and senility. Eldorado is the inversion of the Christian Paradise, but the belief in a paradise lost and a faith in the possibility of a paradise regained lies deep in the classical-Christian consciousness. There is a relationship between Protestantism and Romanticism, direct but circumspect, in that both sought to re-establish a lost view of nature and man,

and it is no coincidence that Rousseau the Romantic was a son of Geneva, a spiritual descendent of Calvin the Christian primitivist.

The trouble with primitivism is that it tends to alienate itself from the very culture it wishes to save, and thus by choice becomes impotent. By refusing to accept the values of technological and industrial culture, the primitivist evades the most important task of the artist: to interpret new forms of thought and expression, and to integrate the values of his culture as a whole. Baird demonstrates with a wealth of example the fact that "to the maker of primitivist art, the city is the emblem of cultural failure"; that "recent primitivism is defined in its true character . . . through its unremitting denunciation of the city as the supreme modern evil." But the truth is that the city is the supreme modern fact, neither good nor evil in itself, and that by deserting it the artist may escape his purgatory, but he also rejects his vocation, indeed his true, saving, spiritual function. To reject the city as a symbol of cultural failure is to speak of the failure of the artist and not of the culture, for the city is the most characteristic expression of the modern cultural (and therefore religious) creativity. The Bible itself begins in a garden and ends in a city.

Finally, one must ask if primitivism really is hostile to modern cultural values, or if it has not made its peace with them. The inspiration Picasso drew from African sculpture seems to suggest that it has, as does the music of Stravinsky, Bartok, Milhaud, and indeed, of modern American jazz. The religious implications of "blues" singing is manifest. In the case of Picasso, Braque, and cubism, the inspiration was of a formal nature and effect, but Mr. Baird does not believe that form as such has meaning apart from an ideological structure.

The real contribution of his book lies in Mr. Baird's penetrating effort to remind us that the first function of art is religious. This function is not auxiliary; it has nothing to do with illustration or representation as such, or with expressing doctrine in noble phrases, nor with forcing language to triumph over reason. If the artist is anything, he is a creator. With symbols, the common tools of craft, he employs the very substance of religious expression. It is therefore his task to state truth in symbols meaningful

to his own culture, and to create new symbolic language which meets the needs of his time. By placing the primitivist movement in this perspective, Mr. Baird has provided us with a new dimension for understanding the creative act.

HARVEY BUCHANAN

THE RED PRIEST. By Wyndham Lewis. Methuen. 1956.

Superficially the brash satiric comedy of *One Way Song* (1933) doesn't seem especially to match the complicated and basically serious tone of *The Red Priest*; but his snatch of "fight-talk" by the militant Enemy suggests precisely the subject of Mr. Lewis's new novel:

—I am the man thus brought in contact with
Misery, to see it, and make of it a myth.
No hollow man, a tin pulse in his wrist—
I have always thought it better to resist
From childhood up, and have done with every fear.
About *nothing* I am absolutely clear.

Wyndham Lewis's greatest insight into our time has been his acute and often frightening perception of the frosty void underlying the bright surface clatter of twentieth-century social existence. Whatever the momentary trappings elicited by a particular situation or strategy, this compulsive theme has informed all his fiction—and much of his polemical writing too. Despite several notable successes, however, Lewis did not till the mid-thirties seem to be quite certain to what artistic, that is literary, use it might best be put. (Which does not bring into question the energy and intelligence of such fictions as "Cantelman's Spring Mate," *Tarr*, a handful of stories in *The Wild Body*, parts of *The Apes of God*, or even a left-handed satirical skit like *Snooty Baronet*. A comparison of the 1928 *Childermass* and its recent continuation *The Human Age*, demonstrates abundantly the extent to which Lewis has clarified his intentions and, at the same time, consolidated his resources.) Beginning in 1937 with *The Reverence for Love*, Wyndham Lewis has been engaged in exploring, assimilating, and mastering in narrative terms his stark vision. *The Red Priest*, like

Self Condemned, is launched frankly from the heart of the vacuum.

The "red priest" is Father Augustine Card, Vicar of the Church of St. Catherine and the Angels—a simple-minded, though not simple, amateur boxer turned cleric who equates a primitive, dynamic, "serious" Christianity with the Russian church, complete with alcoholic bishops, in Moscow. He intends to rejuvenate contemporary London by a public march down Whitehall—with himself filling in as Jesus Christ. These wild plans never reach definite expression because Card, in a fit of rage, brutally beats to death an irritating Curate with a weak heart.

The novel, however, is as much concerned with the Vicar's associates and friends, especially his wife, as it is with Card. For that reason, the method of presentation differs, though not radically, from that in Lewis's other recent fiction. In a manner reminiscent of *The Apes of God*, the reader is treated to a series of short chapters, cannily juxtaposed to release their full meaning, each figuring the reaction of someone to the ambiguous but, so it appears, curiously attractive personality of father Card. Most of these characters, many of them highly stylized "types," are handled with a deft relish that imparts to them a vivid Dickensian individuality. Lewis's detailed knowledge of such people, coupled with his knack for rendering them up with all the bland detachment of an experienced explorer reporting on the flora and fauna of an unknown jungle, verges on the harrowing. (They are not, I should add, set up like the lay figures in *The Apes of God* merely to be nailed figuratively to the wall of the collector's den by a bombardment of picturesque epithets.) Two of the most successful of these characters were first sketched-out, under different names, in an *Encounter* story called "Pish-Tush": the quietly dreary spinster, Miss Jane Greevy, who drinks gin once a week with a group of incredible female friends; and the loudly dreary renter of her empty garage, Hughie Bestens-Corbett, an offensive example of over-aggressive bourgeois masculinity engaged in a recurrent feud with the neighborhood juvenile delinquents, a mysterious battalion of armored pygmies who commandeer accessible dustbin covers to mobilize as shields in their eternal gang warfare. These seedy characters, remnants of a shabby genteelism adrift in postwar

London, serve to secure the narrative in space and time, but they have another and more important function: they, like the puppets set jangling by the jazzed prose of *The Wild Body*, participate in the rituals of an inferior religion; but since they have no idea what they worship (or that they do), their ritualistic postures, the hypostatization of faded social activity, lack any meaning. Since 1933, Lewis's perspective has changed considerably; his understanding has cut steadily deeper; taunts (like the one that follows) began to disappear as the humanity of his work increased; but the analysis remained, and still remains, unaltered:

Your God's forever there under your nose,
His attributes are counted on your toes!
And what's the odds if now and then you feel
A bit mechanical and not quite 'real'?

In *The Human Age*, Pullman could remember his earthly life, and when he was alive at least it had seemed to make a certain sense: hence he kept trying to find some *raison d'être* for the Magnetic City; but the chief "point" of Hell, as he discovered when he got there, was its very *pointlessness*. Once he had attained that perception, he was ready to proceed to another stage of enlightenment. This isn't to argue, of course, that the London of *The Red Priest* is identical to the Hell of *The Human Age*; it is not. But the difference between the setting of the new novel and that of the first half of *The Human Age* is simply this: that its inhabitants, unlike those of the Magnetic City, do not generally perceive the substantial hollowness of their existence. They live (as it were) in Eliot's *Waste Land*, and it has never occurred to them to ask the crucial question: "What shall we do tomorrow? What shall we ever do?"

The concrete demonstration of this clockwork dance performed mindlessly over the void is essential to the development of Lewis's theme. His previous work has proved that he is superbly equipped to render it. Yet not all *The Red Priest* is equally well done. The cause of technical defection, usually a carelessness that violates the impressionist canon, is easily located; as Lewis himself explained in *One Way Song*: "The features of nonentity is *not* inspiring." There are scenes, required by structural necessity, where

the intensity of Lewis's interest patently decreases and the lucid style becomes neutral. On such occasions, the minor characters tend to revert to caricature (cf. chapter 19, "The Ghastly Girl"). Fortunately such lapses are not frequent; the general momentum of the plot, backed by an accumulation of vivid incident, is sufficient to sustain the impact of the action when the writing falters.

Wyndham Lewis, disguised as the soldier of humor, once remarked: "I cannot help converting everything into burlesque patterns." This provides the clue to one dimension of *The Red Priest*, which is best understood, in a Poundian sense, as a "criticism" by parody of *The Cocktail Party*—which is, after all, rather Lewisian in its concern with the nagging question of reality. Mary Chillingham, who becomes Card's wife, corresponds to the majority of people who, like the Chamberlaynes, elect without hesitation what Mr. Eliot's psychiatrist-priest calls "the human condition," the giving and taking of what there is to be given and taken. She wants to make the best of the workaday world, not to transcend it; a sensible, pretty girl, indeed the quintessence of "normality," she marries Card because she thinks she loves him, as in fact she does, though not with the devotion of a Margot Stamp—and because she must escape an intolerable family situation. Unhappily for her, she doesn't expect Card to be different from the persons she already knows, only better.

It is mostly through her eyes, and never directly through his own, that we see Augustine Card. The Vicar is, in one sense, a parody of Mr. Eliot's "saint"—who, with a perverted faith that issues less from despair than from boundless egoism, decides to make the blind journey towards the undescribable destination (as a missionary, he finally has his throat cut by some Eskimos). Both Card and his wife are simultaneously parody figures and human beings. They have no notion of being "sick," and Lewis inserts no spokesman into the book to tell them. If Card's career parodies that of the Eliotic saint, it also parodies that of the Lewisian hero who broods up a world and then expects the experiential reality to correspond with the ideal. Card is an imposter, however, a Kreisler trying to pretend that he is Tarr. For the genuine "hero," whatever the falsity of his initial premises, is a figure of genius;

but Card is a stupid man, corrupting his religion by treating it like politics. Moreover, he is not so much wrong about the actual world as he is about his own nature, which is that of a "fighting machine." Because his acts fail repeatedly to mesh with his mental picture of himself, he must insist that he deliberately murdered the Curate; otherwise, should the killing be accidental, the Vicar is reduced to a Wild Body struggling murkily in the grip of external stimuli. He is tried and convicted for manslaughter; after his release, still refusing to abandon his role of self-denominated messiah, he insists on becoming a missionary to the most desolate region he can imagine, where he brawls with a thieving Eskimo and is subsequently murdered. His wife and son leave England.

Mary and Basil Tertullian withdrew to the plantation on the shores of Lake Rudulf, where she gave birth to another child. Her naming was more like a branding; she gave him the fearful name of Zero. She could see that he would look like his terrible father; that he was fated to blast his way across space and time.

The originality of Mr. Wyndham Lewis need not be insisted upon; it is surely as evident as his celebrated arrogance, occasional self-pity, transient misanthropy (all leavened by a tonic humor), and his unquestionable genius. His finest literary accomplishments have been the result of his severe and skillful manipulation of such apparently irrelevant attributes; a kind of purgation. In *Self-Condemned*, he composed an uneven but authentic modern tragedy—an achievement which only Mr. Faulkner, by invoking the Gothic backdrop of the feudal American South, has been able in *Absalom, Absalom!* partially to equal. *The Red Priest*, though bearing a family resemblance to *Self-Condemned*, is not intended to be a tragedy. Card is terrible and pathetic, always bordering on a tragic recognition but never quite achieving it. The startling effect of his career reaches the reader mostly at second hand, filtered through the consciousness of his wife. With all her perceptivity, Mary Card does not attain the stature of a tragic figure; her love for Card is betrayed by her desire for economic security (she has no intention of allowing her private income to fall into the hands of her improvident and demanding husband). Card is ob-

essed with his conception of himself; his wife is constantly restrained by a certain cautious, mundane meanness of spirit. Neither is able or willing to commit himself to the other; the Vicar, in any case, is dangerously mad; and so neither can hope really to grasp the other's motivation. They are both trapped in what Mr. Hugh Kenner would call the Cartesian nightmare, attempting fitfully to punch a finger through to something solid, but unable to succeed. For how can the victims of the notorious "spirit," the divorce of soul from body, achieve in regard to love, whatever they may will, more than a momentary and meaningless sexual conjunction? This is contributory to the dilemma of Vincent Penhale (it is one source of error) and his bewildered wife in *The Vulgar Streak* (1941), which in style and theme has much in common with the present novel.

It is plain that *The Red Priest* is predicated in the same tragic pessimism that informs *The Human Age*. (Though I must confess to the suspicion that the latter work, when it is completed, will turn out to be ultimately comic: a debate, rather like that in *The Childermass*, in which the minuscule absurdity—man—may be redeemed by the grandeur of God.) What, then, is the mode of *The Red Priest*? The answer lies in the tone of the prose itself. Here is a partial description of a service in Father Card's church:

The antiphonal response from the small cluster of choristers facing the glittering little nest of singers on the other side of the chancel, gave a vocal answer that was raw and deep, and trembling, as though from captive children; this indeed was the impression created in an untutored mind of some vivacity.

The purpose of the second clause is to detach the reader from the impression. We are constantly aware of the presence of a highly energetic intelligence that refuses to adhere to any of the characters; it is clearly that of the author himself. A rigorously distinct aesthetic distance is thus established from the onset, and maintained throughout. The result is a genuine (if imperfect*) metaphysical satire, a report on the truth available to the mature in-

*It goes without saying that it is the inheritor, and not the inventor, who has time to *perfect* a form. This is not inevitably so, but likely.

tellect—minus the brilliant claptrap, with its built-in defenses, of *The Apes of God*. Wyndham Lewis is willing, as he has been for some years now, to let his characters and story stand by themselves. *The Red Priest*, which may be instructively compared with the judgments embedded in *Troilus and Cressida*, is indeed (to borrow a phrase from Ezra Pound) a cold tune amid reeds, tough-minded but not tough, a song whose substance is not so much pity or terror as an impersonal despair—by one of the half dozen giants of literature in our century.

THOMAS H. CARTER

TWO SOLDIERS: TWO SHORT NOVELS. By Paxton Davis. Simon and Schuster. 1956.

Most war novels of the recent decade have been taxing representations of the very banality of those who read them with any interest. Among these I would put *The Naked and the Dead*, *The Young Lions*, *From Here to Eternity* (not, strictly speaking, a war novel), and *The Caine Mutiny*. From this list I would exclude John Horne Burns' *The Gallery*. Mr. Burns seems to have been the only one to have conceived of the novel as an art form; for the others, the only requirement was that the novel should be huge and sincere (obscene)—"panoramic" is the word, I believe. Unfortunately, Mr. Burns' talent soon extinguished itself in a rather self-conscious academic satire *Lucifer with a Book*, and a Bohemian exposé novel, *The Cry of Children*. James Michener's *Tales of the South Pacific* were diverting, if facile, and they found their proper end in a Broadway musical. So we are left with no substantial literary record of World War II. (Randall Jarrell's poetry is not under consideration here.)

I had better make it clear that I am not asking for a sort of human interest reporting of the war, nor giving the novelists coverage assignments as one might give reporters. Journalists write journalese, almost by definition; so I allow writers their discretion as to subjects. But it is perhaps symptomatic of the "failure of nerve" *The Partisan Review* used to talk about that none of our novelists has even attempted to do what Homer and Tolstoi

did: mirror the cultural as well as the individual crisis in the stress of war. In fact, the most prevalent and coherent vision of public war that we get from these recent novelists is of its total lack of meaning, its existential absurdity. So we have, even in the "panoramic" novels, a series of private wars: internecine psychological struggles and internal conflicts in which the ultimate battleground is the individual human heart. I am not objecting to this; in fact, I have always secretly preferred *The Red Badge of Courage* to *War and Peace*, though I admit to a long-standing grudge against books over five hundred pages long. And these novelists we are discussing are closer to Stephen Crane in terms of scope than to Tolstoi. Unfortunately, most of them do not command the technical resources of a Crane.

Like Mr. Burns, Paxton Davis is better equipped than most of them. His first short novel, *Ledo*, begins in this fashion:

Now of the times that went before he came to Ledo we know nothing, for the story starts there that morning he crossed the compound in the rain, splashing the mud against his leggings, and kicked the door open and went inside.

That is finely poised. We glide smoothly, almost imperceptibly, into a fictional world which is *there*, immediately. And it is a fairly problematic world, we soon learn.

Outside he could hear the steady pounding of India's monsoon rains. They were beating now, he knew, all across Asia, flooding the rice fields, choking the roads, bringing the lives of millions, already torpid with the heat and poverty of centuries, to a stop.

"But the soldiering goes on and on," he said aloud. "And the hell with the weather."

There is a degree of sententiousness operating here and throughout the first chapter (each novel has five sections):

And so he saw it go, and knew it was gone, and knew that all he could do now was to say things that meant nothing. Not to Goff. Not to himself.

—the tone of Hemingway parodying himself (a not infrequent circumstance: one would suppose that soldiers' emotions occur

only in staccato rhythms and run-on sentences.) But I am finding faults in what I hope to exhibit as a singularly successful first work.

The world we are in is the semi-tropical Burma-India area in World War II, at Ledo, where Captain Hacker and a young Negro private Goff, are fighting a war of nerves. The Captain's discipline over himself and his troops is seriously lax. Picking the lazy, rebellious Goff as scapegoat, he makes a final effort at establishing control by threatening to punish the private with a zealous severity for some repeated misdemeanors. Goff flees the camp, unintentionally shoots the pursuing Captain, and seeks refuge in the jungle, hiding from his crime. There suffering fever and privation, he is rescued by some natives and lives happily with them for awhile. Meanwhile a young sergeant, Adams, sent to find and arrest Goff for murder, has broken his leg and contracted fever in the jungle. The natives bring him to their village, where Goff nurses him. Adams is failing rapidly, however, and Goff returns with him on a litter to the camp at Ledo, where he recovers. Despite the young sergeant's pleas for clemency, Goff is court-martialed and hanged for the Captain's murder.

This is a simple outline of the story. Much of its force lies in the clean economy with which it is told, and what vitiation there is owes to a certain overstatement of the moral premises of the tale, especially in the last chapter.

"A sort of Christ," the chaplain said.

"No. Not that. Only a good man."

The chaplain smiled. "It's almost the same thing," he said.

"If they hang him—" he said, and stopped. He was almost breathless now with what he had seen. "If they hang him, they're hanging all of us."

The ethical base is the same as in Conrad. Structurally, the story shifts from the Captain's point of view in Chapter I, to Goff's in the next three chapters, to Adams' in Chapter V. This parallels the developing conceptions of authority, which is what *Ledo* is about, primarily. In Chapter I we see the collapse of the Captain's authority, both internal and external, and Goff's flight from outer authority. We then follow Goff through the jungle, his heart of darkness, and his feverish *nox animae magna*, which

is all terror and hallucination. His merciful return to Ledo, seen through Adams' eyes in Chapter V, is thus a return to the sanctions of military authority and human justice, a return from the dark night to the clearness of moral vision, and a return from irresponsibility to the inner authority of self-discipline.

Destruction of the self, both theologically and literally, is the expense of Goff's honor. Human justice has somewhat questionable motives—"No black nigger bastard's going to go off and shoot a white officer and get away with it"—but it demands the proper price. If we could commit the indecorum of titling Mr. Davis' chapters, then we might call Chapter I "The Captain's Authority: Disintegration" and Chapter V "The Final Authority: Reconciliation." What Goff has learned is the lesson Conrad's heroes learn: that the way "to be" is to "in the destructive element immerse"; that the severest duties are those least demanded by a pragmatic morality, the most self-sacrificing; and that, while man's way is certainly not God's way, and soldiers are not ministers, it is nonetheless incumbent on him to accept human authority and justice with benignity, for it is the best he has in a world elemented of sin. Personal anarchy is the parent of chaos.

Mr. Davis' second novel in this collection, *Myithyina* (myit-ché-nā: a town in Burma), gets through two chapters quite nicely, but bogs down in the third. The novel moves by a gradual intensification and final release of the fear felt by a medic, Baker, when required suddenly to go into battle. This is all very well, but we might hope to have fear better rendered than this:

He shook his head and ground his teeth together. He put his face down for a moment and closed his eyes. Suppose those Japs down there started up the hill toward him? Could he kill a man? Could he pull the trigger? Could he hit him if he wanted to?

and intuitions less awkwardly realized than this:

For he knew now, knew though he did not know how he knew, that the Jap was afraid, that he was running away, that he had fled witlessly from the fighting below.

When Baker finally wins the fight with himself, it all takes place in the gimcrack terms of MGM heroics:

Baker's head snapped up. His eyes flared. He looked at Battee. Battee looked at him He looked to where the Japs ran on, tiny figures now. They were running away. They were running from him.

We confidently await a surge of background music when Mr. Davis tells us about "the unexpected, the shocking, the searing discovery that killing can be joy as well as horror, ecstasy as well as pain." (I am not patronizing the earnestness here, but it should be pointed out that this discovery is at least as old as the *Iliad*.)

He had come all that way to kill the man within himself. And what did it matter now, what could it matter, that beyond Myitkyina there were a thousand other towns to take, a thousand other men to kill, a thousand other deaths to die? What did anything matter now? You did what you had to do because you could when you had to. That was all that mattered now. A man could do what he must.

One need only add *Excelsior* for further clarification. Mr. Davis has been explicit to the point of becoming overt; *Myitkyina* is, on the whole, as much a failure as *Ledo* is a success.

So *Two Soldiers* does not supply us with the novel I spoke of earlier. (I do *not* mean this as an adverse criticism.) I still await a novel that gives the comprehensive record of the war, as two sections of Pound's *Mauberley* recorded World War I. My guess is that it will not appear; or if it does, that it will be a sprawling, naturalistic, preachy affair. And I do not recommend to Mr. Davis, accomplished as he unquestionably is, that he try to write it. He does very well with private wars.

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